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# Holy Warriors and Bellicose Bishops: The Church and Warfare in Early Medieval Germany

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HOLY WARRIORS AND BELLICOSE BISHOPS:  
THE CHURCH AND WARFARE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL GERMANY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Nicholas E. Friend

August 2015

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HOLY WARRIORS AND BELLICOSE BISHOPS:  
THE CHURCH AND WARFARE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL GERMANY

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## ABSTRACT

### HOLY WARRIORS AND BELLICOSE BISHOPS: THE CHURCH AND WARFARE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL GERMANY

By Nicholas E. Friend

The Frankish kingdoms of the early Middle Ages were the inheritors of both Germanic warrior culture and the Christian institutions of the late Roman Empire. Under Charlemagne, the Franks conquered most of Western Europe by the early ninth century and established a new empire of their own. To do so, they had to reconcile the Christian doctrine of peace with the necessity of killing the enemy during war. This was especially challenging for the highest ranks of the clergy. Though forbidden by canon law to commit violence, bishops and abbots were responsible for defending the property and people in their jurisdictions. The pious Carolingian kings endowed the Church with more property but required service of their land-holding prelates in exchange, which included providing troops for the royal army and, frequently, leading those troops themselves. By the time of the Ottonians (919-1024), rulers of the East Frankish kingdom that developed into the medieval German empire, the participation of bishops and abbots in war had become institutionalized. Even so, opinions within the Church remained divided on the morality of clerics taking an active part in combat. The context of Ottonian rule and the complex relationship between the German emperors and their ecclesiastical magnates are examined in this study. This is followed by an analysis of the primary narrative sources from the period. The textual evidence shows the range of opinions held by the clerical authors and the extent of Ottonian prelates' military roles and allows a conclusion to be formed as to how common the phenomenon of the "warrior bishop" actually was.

For Elizabeth, *imperatrix domum meam*

## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	<i>Annales Bertiniani</i>
AF	<i>Annales Fuldensis</i>
ARF	<i>Annales Regni Francorum</i>
FSGA	Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Capit.	Capitularia
DO III	Charter of Otto III
Epist.	Epistolae
Poet. Lat.	Poetae Latinae
SS	Scriptores
SSrG	Scriptores rerum Germanicum in usum scholarium
SSrG NS	Scriptores rerum Germanicum, Nova series

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the great reifications of history is that society in the European Middle Ages was organized into the “three estates”: the armed nobility who fought for the defense of all, the Christian clergy who prayed for everyone’s souls, and the commoners who farmed and worked so that all should have food and the material necessities of life. Though simplistic, this understanding is based on a vision of an ordered society that began to inspire the pens of clerical thinkers with increasing frequency beginning in the late tenth century.<sup>1</sup> The reality of medieval social structure was, of course, more complex and varied according to time, place and socio-economic conditions. This was especially true in the Medieval German Empire. As in the rest of Christian Europe, bishops and abbots belonged almost to a man to the same social stratum as secular counts and dukes, so that the division between “the Church” and “the nobility” was often blurred. The conditions that prevailed in early medieval Germany produced a clerical class that not only tended to have worldview similar to that of the armed aristocracy but was obliged to fulfill many of the same military duties in service to the emperor and the Reich, up to, and sometimes including, fighting in person. Such at least is the lingering impression. The literati of the High Middle Ages, looking at their own generation, could be as guilty of oversimplification as moderns looking back over several centuries, and the “fighting bishops of the Empire” seems to have become something of a self-effacing joke. German

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Reuter, “Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare,” in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. Maurice Keen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34.

moralists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries often harped on the sins of militant ecclesiastics; Caesarius of Heisterbach, writing in the 1220s, told of a Paris student who was prepared to believe anything except that a German bishop could achieve salvation, since such a man was more apt to think on the wages of his troops than the souls of his flock.<sup>2</sup>

This caricature of the warrior prelate was not just a product of high medieval imagination but an image that evolved from reality. It was based on a practice that originated in the Frankish empire founded in the fifth century by the Merovingian kings and continued under the Carolingian dynasty that came to rule nearly all of Christian Europe—first as uncrowned warlords, then as kings, and ultimately as “Roman” emperors—from the early eighth century through the end of the ninth. Frankish society was very much defined by war and its bishops and abbots were frequently involved in military matters in apparent contradiction to the teachings of the church. After the Carolingian empire fragmented, the royal bloodline faded away in East Francia and gave way to a dynasty of Saxon lineage, which ruled the nascent German Reich during the tenth century and the first quarter of the eleventh. History knows them as the Ottonians. The idea of the martial prelate is most commonly associated with Ottonian Germany.

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<sup>2</sup> *Dialogus Miraculorum* II.27, ed J. Strange (Cologne, 1851), vol. 1, 99. Cited in Timothy Reuter, “*Episcopi cum sua militia*: The Prelate as Warrior in the Early Staufer Era,” in *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 79.

Until relatively recently,<sup>3</sup> the study of the period has hinged on the premise of the *Reichskirchensystem* (imperial church system). This approach assumes that the German monarch had the power to appoint prelates to positions of his choosing and that he relied on the lords of “his” church to serve as the principal ministers of government in preference to the lay nobility and to provide troops for the empire’s defense.

This notion of the “fighting churchman” raises a series of questions which are examined and answered in this study. In the first place, how did early medieval society reconcile the sin of killing with the necessity of waging war, and how particularly did the leading churchmen of the Frankish empire come to be tasked with military duties? Having established this, what evidence can be found in primary source documents for churchmen in early medieval Germany participating in war, and what form did such participation take? In simplest terms, did these bishops and abbots actually do battle with weapon in hand? If so, was this the rule or the exception? Finally, since the literate of the European Middle Ages were overwhelmingly clerical, what opinions were held by the authors of the above sources regarding the morality of war? How did they understand the role(s) played by fellow men of the cloth in war, and did they approve?

These questions are best understood through the narrative sources, that is, chronicles and histories, personal accounts of events, and the *vitae* (lives) and *gesta* (deeds) of great men (and occasionally women). A significant number of these were written under the

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<sup>3</sup> For Timothy Reuter’s 1982 rebuttal of the *Reichskirchensystem*, see Chapter 8.

Ottonians. In particular, the biographical works of leading prelates have survived in quantity unmatched by the Carolingian era. With this in mind, and also because of the widespread association of warlike churchmen with the later period, this study focuses on Ottonian Germany and considers the Carolingian sources more briefly and by way of a preamble to the story of the tenth and early eleventh century. The limitations of this study impose a cut-off date of 1024, the year that saw the death of the last Ottonian emperor Henry II and the accession of the Salian dynasty in the person of Conrad II. Likewise, there are related topics that are well worth exploring but are beyond the scope of the present work. These include (but are not limited to) a comparison of practices in early medieval Germany to those in Anglo-Saxon England, whether the development of the martial church in the post-Roman West had parallels in the Byzantine East, the evolution of tactics and military equipment, and how the voices of women, too often marginalized, contributed to the record. The author regrets that not all the questions that deserve answering have been answered herein.

Part I analyzes the acceptance of war by the early Christian church and describes the genesis and development of the Frankish empire in relation to these doctrinal challenges. It concludes with a short overview of the evidence for churchmen at war found in the Carolingian narrative sources of the eighth and ninth centuries. Part II begins with a summary of the reigns of the Saxon-Ottonian kings, followed by a description of their “imperial church system.” The remaining five chapters examine the main source documents of the late tenth century and early eleventh century to determine the military roles of Ottonian churchmen and the opinions of the writers who chronicled them.

## PART I

### THE ORIGINS OF MEDIEVAL GERMANY AND ITS CHURCH

## 1. THE PARADOX OF THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

The contradiction between God's seventh commandment not to kill (Exodus 20:13) and the soldier's profession of bearing arms to do just that presented a stumbling block for the integration of Christianity into the late Roman Empire. Holy scripture was, as it always has been, ambiguous and open to interpretation. On the one hand, Saint Paul seems to have approved the use of the sword by authority to punish wrongdoing (Rom. 13:1) and also encouraged Christians to abide in the career to which they were called (I Cor. 7:20), which tenet could be applied as well to soldiering as to any other profession.<sup>1</sup> On the other, the most enduring words of the prophet Isaiah, who declared that swords would one day be beaten into ploughshares (Isaiah 2:4), were quoted in the second century by Justin Martyr as grounds for non-violence.<sup>2</sup> The opinions of the early church fathers varied as they did on many topics during Christianity's formative centuries. Some condemned killing in war as outright murder, while others decried the soldier's profession not for the killing *per se*, but because it was worldly and idolatrous to follow an authority other than that of God. The church's official retention in the second century of the authority of the Old Testament with its vengeful God of war made it difficult to repudiate war altogether.<sup>3</sup> Theologians of the third century exhorted pious Christians not to enlist in the Roman army, or, if they had converted while in the ranks, to lay their arms

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Cushman McGiffert, "Christianity and War: A Historical Sketch" (*The American Journal of Theology* 19, No. 3), 323.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr *First Apology* 110; cited in McGiffert, 324.

<sup>3</sup> McGiffert 325.

down; but gradually the position of the church was evolving from the wholesale rejection of armed violence in any form to an acceptance of war waged in the cause of justice. Origen (184-254) wrote that while Christians ought not to participate in war directly, they could with a clear conscience pray for the emperor to fight and rule righteously.<sup>4</sup> The success of Constantine the Great (306-37) at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 was not only a watershed moment in the eventual conversion of the Empire, but a turning point for the place of warfare in Christian thought. As Constantine ascribed his victory to the Christian God who had supposedly inspired him in a vision the night before the battle to advance his army under the banner of the *Chi Rho* for Christ, so his Christian subjects saw him thereafter as their champion against heathenism. This was reinforced by Constantine's subsequent triumphs in the civil war that made him sole emperor, and the church would henceforth support the imperial wars, embracing God as a god of war like the Jewish Yaweh.<sup>5</sup> Christianity was officially protected from persecution within the Empire under Constantine and subsequently became the state religion. Nearly a century later, the emperor Honorius (393-423) issued an edict expelling pagans from the army<sup>6</sup> and made the Christian soldier a matter of law.

The writings of Saint Augustine (354-430) gave the authorities of late antiquity and the Middle Ages the means to explicitly justify war as a good Christian endeavor and part

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<sup>4</sup> Origen *Contra Celsum* viii.73; cited in McGiffert, 326.

<sup>5</sup> McGiffert 328-9.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Grant, *The Roman Emperors* (Charles Scribner's sons, 1985), 285.

of a well-ordered society. Augustine posited that the *bellum justum* (just war) waged for the right reasons—to defend life and property, or to avenge wrongs and recover property unjustly taken—was acceptable if it was conducted by a prince whose authority derived from God and was not motivated by greed or cruelty. In essence, as Karl Leyser puts it, the just war was a form of Christian charity intended to produce an outcome of peace and harmony that was better than what had been before.<sup>7</sup> Modern students are most apt to cite Augustine’s discussion of the *bellum justum* found in chapters XV.4 and XIX.7 of *De Civitate Dei* (the city of God), written late in his life. However, an earlier work, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (against Faustus the Manichee), which Augustine completed around 398 to repudiate the Manichaean religion he had once followed, contains his fullest treatment on the theme of warfare.<sup>8</sup> Here he refutes Faustus’ claims that wars waged at God’s behest by the patriarchs of the Old Testament are in contradiction with the teachings of Jesus. He cites three passages from the New Testament in support of the lawfulness of war: Luke 3:14, in which John admonishes the soldiers who came to him for baptism, “be content with your wages,” i.e., continue in your career; Matthew 22:21, in which Jesus says, “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” explaining that “tribute

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Leyser, “Warfare in the Western European Middle Ages: The Moral Debate,” in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Gregorian Revolution and Beyond*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London and Rio Grande, Ohio: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 192-201 passim. Also Phillipe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 264-5.

<sup>8</sup> R.A. Markus, “Saint Augustine’s Views on the ‘Just War’,” in *The Church and War: Papers Read at the Twenty-First Summer Meeting and the Twenty-Second Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W.J. Sheils (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 5.



money is given on purpose to pay the soldiers for war;” and Matthew 8:9, where Jesus “gave due praise to [the centurion’s] faith. He did not tell him to leave the service.”<sup>9</sup> Augustine continues, “If it is supposed that God could not enjoin warfare, because in after times it was said by the Lord Jesus Christ, ‘I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but if any one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also,’ the answer is, that what is here required is not a bodily action, but an inward disposition.”<sup>10</sup>

At first blush, this interpretation of Christ’s ubiquitous tenet of peace might seem unorthodox to the modern reader, but it was not so in the context of the fifth century. R.A. Markus points out that Augustine can scarcely be credited, as he often has been, with checking the pacifist inclinations of early Christian thought.<sup>11</sup> Saint Athanasius (296-393), who had participated in the Council of Nicaea under Constantine, wrote that even though “...it is not permitted to kill... in war to slay the enemy is both legitimate and worthy of praise.”<sup>12</sup> The great Saint Ambrose (340-397), Bishop of Milan, observed that while the study of war seemed foreign to the clergy, the holy figures of the Old Testament such as Joshua and David “won the highest glory also in war.”<sup>13</sup> Ambrose

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<sup>9</sup> St. Augustine *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon*, trans. Rev. Richard Stothert (in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. IV, ed. Philip Schaff [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1872]), XXII.74.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. XXII.76; cited in McGiffert, 331.

<sup>11</sup> Markus 11.

<sup>12</sup> St. Athanasius *Ep. Ad Amunem*; cited in McGiffert, 329-330.

<sup>13</sup> St. Ambrose *On the Duties of the Clergy*; cited in McGiffert, 330.

used descriptions of war to illustrate Christian principles on several occasions, sometimes literally and sometimes metaphorically. Though one should strive for peace, it could be achieved "...through the anxious forethought of the emperor or the hands of the soldiers, or... from the favorable outcome of wars..."<sup>14</sup> He also spoke of how "...the wonderful power of discourse that incited the good soldiers of Christ to battle... [with] our enemy the devil,"<sup>15</sup> and described unit banners on the battlefield as a metaphor for the strength of one's faith: "One who is a loyal soldier follows his own ensigns and does not recognize those of a stranger."<sup>16</sup>

Expanding on the thoughts of these earlier church fathers, Augustine believed that pacifism may have been appropriate for the apostolic age, but that in his own troubled time war was an inescapable part of society and must therefore be regulated, like all human activity, by God's law. Further, in his *Questions on the Heptateuch*, he not only reiterates the conditions for a just war but justifies the use of strategems and the legitimacy of offensive war as well as defensive.<sup>17</sup> Augustine thus provided the mold for "official" Christian opinion on war from that point on. In the words of A. C. McGiffert,

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<sup>14</sup> St. Ambrose *Jacob and the Happy Life*, trans. Michael P. McHugh in *St. Ambrose: Seven Exegetical Works (The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, vol. 65* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1972), 6.29.163.

<sup>15</sup> St. Ambrose *The Patriarchs*, trans. McHugh in *ibid.* 11.56.273.

<sup>16</sup> St. Ambrose *The Prayer of Job and David*, trans. McHugh in *ibid.* 7.26.409-10.

<sup>17</sup> St. Augustine *Questions on the Heptateuch* VI.10; cited in McGiffert, 332.

he “made it possible... for Christian princes to invoke the authority of religion in justification of many wars of very doubtful character.”<sup>18</sup>

The princes of the early medieval period did not necessarily subscribe to this contradiction in blind faith. Charlemagne, that shining example of kingship idealized by so many who came after him, seemed to have been well aware of the disconnect between the theory of peace and the reality of war, though he was no more able to close that gap than any of his successors.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> McGiffert 332.

<sup>19</sup> J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West: The Early Middle Ages A.D. 400-1000* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 104.

## 2. THE BIRTH OF THE FRANKISH KINGDOM

“The Fall of the Roman Empire” is a phrase that conjures vivid images in the Western imagination, but historians have long understood it to be a misnomer. After 395 there were for all practical purposes two empires: a western one ruled by an emperor in Rome (later Milan and Ravenna) and an eastern one under an emperor in Constantinople, with the latter being the more influential of the two.<sup>1</sup> The Empire itself continued under eastern rule well after the deposition of the last western emperor. The transfer of power in the west from Roman to Germanic control was a drawn-out process that occurred over two centuries, gradual at some stages and abrupt at others. Throughout the fifth century, the Germanic peoples, nearly all of whom were Arian Christians compared to the Catholic Romans,<sup>2</sup> fought against Rome and for Rome against one another for land and influence. Far from remaining mere foreign mercenaries, many of the tribal leaders, the so-called “imperial Germans,” integrated themselves thoroughly into the uppermost circles of Roman society and politics. The Franks in particular seemed to have been a consistent source for ambitious military commanders. These men advanced to the highest of ranks during the fourth and fifth centuries, influencing the rise and fall of emperors

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<sup>1</sup> John Moorhead, *The Roman Empire Divided* (London: Pearson Education: Longman, 2001), 28-9.

<sup>2</sup> Wolfram, Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1997), 309.

and becoming at times virtual rulers of the Western Empire.<sup>3</sup> Even before Rome herself was sacked (for the first time) by the Visigoths in 410, categories such as barbarian or Roman, pagan or Christian, were not easily delineated.<sup>4</sup> In 476, the warlord Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor in the west, Romulus Augustulus, and advised Emperor Zeno in Constantinople that he would henceforth be happy to rule directly in his name. The date has long been marked as the moment when the Western Roman Empire “fell,” but the fall seemed to have been a *fait accompli* for some time. Averil Cameron calls the final transition “one of the most famous non-events in history.”<sup>5</sup>

The first significant point that should be understood from this process was that the Germanic migrants neither destroyed the Western Empire nor restored it, but transformed it into their own home while continuing to honor the emperors in Constantinople.<sup>6</sup> They took great pains to continue the Roman system of agriculture and property ownership in their new lands,<sup>7</sup> and “...the fact that their swords were drawn in no way diminished their resolve to behave like Romans.”<sup>8</sup> The tradition of *Romanitas*, “Roman-ness,” was to be nostalgically revered by the descendants of Romans and barbarians alike. The Franks,

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<sup>3</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 18-23 passim.

<sup>4</sup> Geary 23. See also Moorhead, 13-30 passim.

<sup>5</sup> Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfram 313.

<sup>7</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 24.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 25.

already established in a position of strength from their domination of the Roman military, were the foremost of the new tenants in the west. Clovis (r. 481-511), the third king of the great Merovingian dynasty, and probably the first Christian one,<sup>9</sup> aggressively expanded the Franks' dominion to include all of Roman Gaul (modern France) and extended their authority over rival tribes on the Eastern side of the Rhine. Merovingian hegemony would endure for some two hundred and fifty years despite constant internal warfare stemming from a bewildering series of divisions, subdivisions and reunifications of the realm amongst sons and grandsons of royal blood, all of whom had a legitimate claim to rule under the Frankish tradition of partible inheritance.<sup>10</sup>

The second notable point is that the threats posed alternately by the Goths and the Huns gave the church in the West a new significance. The Catholic bishops, as the *de facto* leaders of the Roman urban centers, came to be identified with local resistance against the barbarians' military incursions and also stood as torchbearers of orthodoxy in the face of the Goths' heretical Arian Christianity. As the old Roman authority waned in favor of barbarian rule, the bishops represented continuity with *Romanitas*. The Goths, in

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<sup>9</sup> According to Gregory of Tours, Clovis converted after being “found worthy of victory [over the Alamanni] by calling on the name of Christ”—much like Constantine. Christianity and military success were thus linked early on. Gregory of Tours *Historia Francorum*, trans. and ed. Alexander Calder Murray in *The Merovingians* (Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures X, series ed. Paul Edward Dutton [Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006]), II.30. See also Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 84-86.

<sup>10</sup> Matthias Becher, *Charlemagne*, trans. David S. Bachrach (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 20-23. Also covered at length in Geary, *Before France and Germany*.

spite of their religious differences, eventually accepted the bishops' role as intermediaries between themselves and the imperial government.<sup>11</sup>

The Catholic Church was arguably the most important of the furnishings that the Empire left behind in her western house. For the most part, the ecclesiastical institutions in Gaul survived the crumbling of imperial rule and the rise of the Frankish kingdom intact. The administrative structure of the church, similar to the Late Empire's civil structure, provided continuity between the old regime and the new during the period of "Germanization" of Gaul during the sixth through seventh centuries. The old Roman province became a church province administered by a metropolitan archbishop. This office declined in importance over the sixth century as the influence of the Frankish kings in church politics grew.<sup>12</sup> The bishopric usually occupied the same space as the old Roman *civitas* (a city and its surrounding territory) and the bishop took over its political-administrative duties, becoming increasingly more involved in secular government as well as church leadership.<sup>13</sup> This was not new; Constantine had long since established a precedent of allowing bishops to wield a degree of secular jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup> It became especially true south of the Loire. Many bishops in this region came from the old Gallo-Roman senatorial class, which was able to maintain its social superiority within the new

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<sup>11</sup> Becher 28-29.

<sup>12</sup> Becher 20-23.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im früheren Mittelalter* (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, Band 2 [Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971]), 7-8. Also Becher 28.

<sup>14</sup> Cameron 61.

Frankish order well into the seventh century. Although canon law required bishops to be elected freely by their people and clergy, their importance meant that the Frankish kings saw to it that the offices went to trusted supporters,<sup>15</sup> a power they had exercised since the time of Clovis.<sup>16</sup>

The responsibilities of local government included defense, and here the ideal vision of the bishop's office came into conflict with the reality he faced. Priests had been exempted from military service once the Roman Empire officially adopted Christianity and the practice was further codified by ecclesiastical councils in the fifth century. The synodal decrees of the Frankish kings proceeded from this late antique tradition, but the terms used indicate that separating the clergy from violent activity was becoming a matter of prohibition rather than exemption. The councils of the sixth century enacted general bans on both the bearing of arms and hunting for all clergy down to the rank of deacon and provided a table of punishment by excommunication from one to three months for violators. The longest span was reserved for the bishops, suggesting that social status was also a factor. Yet in subsequent councils from the start of the seventh century, the threat of punishment became less defined. The last important Merovingian

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<sup>15</sup> Becher 28.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre Riché, *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*, trans. Jo Ann McNamara (The Middle Ages Series, gen. ed. Ruth M. Karras [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978]), 84.



synod, that of St. Jean de Losne (673-75), failed to mention penalties at all, though bishops were specified in its ban on clerical arms-bearing.<sup>17</sup>

The strident and repeated insistence that the clergy forbear the use of violence, seemingly at odds with the increasingly vague terms of enforcement, shows that the problem had developed into a crisis, at least so far as the council fathers were concerned. However, it was simply unrealistic for them to expect a bishop to adhere strictly to canon law in the face of the reality of defending his *civitas*. While militancy may originally have been forced upon the *Bischofsherrschaft* by circumstance, it seemed to be developing into the status quo. The entry of the conquering Frankish nobility into high-church careers alongside the old Gallo-Roman aristocracy, beginning in the late sixth century and with increasing prevalence in the seventh, introduced strong familial bonds between the lords of the church and their warlike secular counterparts.<sup>18</sup> This was a key feature of Frankish-German society and politics from then on.

The later Merovingian rulers and their councils seemed unable or unwilling to enforce their own prohibitions. This is perhaps unsurprising given the decline of royal authority in the latter half of the seventh century under the so-called *rois fainéants*, the “do-nothing kings.”<sup>19</sup> Real power had passed into the hands of the chief royal officer, the *maior*

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<sup>17</sup> Prinz 5-7 passim.

<sup>18</sup> Prinz 8.

<sup>19</sup> Becher 29. See also Geary, 223-226, for an analysis of the Carolingians’ political need to perpetuate this image as justification for dynastic turnover.

*domus* (mayor of the palace). In the northeastern sub-kingdom of Austrasia, this was a hereditary office held by the nobles of the Arnulfing, or Pippinid, line. The mayor Pepin II conquered rival Neustria following the battle of Tertry in 687. His vigorous son Charles secured the office in 717 after a struggle against his rivals, partly by virtue of the fact that he was the only one of Pepin's male children to survive long enough to take the title. He consolidated his family's power further, subjugating a series of lesser kingdoms and territories, extracting tribute from the pagan Saxons, and defeating a Muslim invasion force at Poitiers in 732. This deed earned him the sobriquet Martel, "the Hammer." *De facto* lord of the Frankish kingdom, Charles Martel ruled by his own hand without even the façade of a crowned monarch from 737 to 741. His sons Pepin III (called "the Younger" or "the Short") and Carloman succeeded him as co-rulers for another two years of interregnum until they found it necessary to raise the last feeble Merovingian, Childeric III, to the throne as their puppet. Carloman abdicated to follow a monastic calling in 747. In 749 or 750, Pepin appealed to Rome with his famous leading question: was it proper for a king without power to have the title? Pope Zacharias returned the answer no, and Pepin deposed Childeric altogether and was anointed in 751. Although the dynasty that followed him was named after his illustrious father, Pepin the Younger became the first true king of the Carolingian line.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Geary 195-200 and 218-220 passim, and Becher 33-37 passim. The date assigned to Pepin's appeal varies.

### 3. BISHOPS, ABBOTS, AND WAR UNDER THE CAROLINGIANS

The Carolingian period saw Christian Europe beset by enemies on all sides: Vikings to the North, Slavs and steppe nomads to the East, and Muslim expansion from the South. The society that developed under these pressures was one largely organized by war, in which the political community, which is to say the nobility, both secular and clerical, tended to be called “the army” even when it was not functioning as one.<sup>1</sup> The disconnect between the growing military obligations of Frankish churchmen and the canonical “rules of engagement” that were repeatedly laid upon them continued to be problematic. Into this unquiet theatre stepped Saint Boniface, the great Anglo-Saxon missionary, reformer and eventual martyr. Boniface was named missionary-bishop for Germany by Pope Gregory II and came under Charles Martel’s protection in 723. On the surface, the warlord of the Franks might have seemed an unlikely sponsor. His highest priorities were military and he had no qualms about appropriating church land to support the vassals who provided his troops. This policy continued under his sons, as seen in Carloman’s capitulary publishing the decrees of the synod of Les Estines of 743:

We order also, by the advice of the servants of God and of the Christian people and in view of imminent wars and attacks by the foreign populations which surround us, that a portion of the properties of the Church shall be used for some time longer, with God’s indulgence, for the benefit of our army, as a *precarium* and paying a *census* [i.e., rent].<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Reuter, “Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare” 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Statuimus quoque cum consilio servorum Dei et populi christiani propter imminencia bella et persecutiones ceterarum gentium, quae in circuitu nostro sunt, ut sub precario en censu aliquam partem ecclesialis pecuniae in adiutorium exercitus nostri cum indulgentia Dei aliquanto*

Boniface was certainly one of those who gave the mayor advice. No doubt he disapproved of the “borrowing” of church property *per se*, but he accepted the necessity of supporting Charles Martel, and then his sons, in their wars against the pagans on their borders. They were happy in turn to sponsor his missionary efforts as an additional way to bring their enemies to heel. In a letter to his friend and colleague Bishop Daniel of Winchester shortly after the succession of Pepin and Carloman, Boniface explained that without the support of “the Frankish prince,” he could “neither govern the members of the Church nor defend the priests, clerks, monks, and maids of God; nor can I, without orders from him and the fear inspired by him, prevent the pagan rites and the sacrilegious worship of idols in Germany.”<sup>3</sup>

His indulgence of Carolingian militarism did not, however, extend so far as the Frankish clergy, especially the aristocratic bishops and abbots whose lifestyle seemed indistinguishable from that of their secular relations.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Pope Zacharias in 742, Boniface congratulated the Holy Father on his recent accession, but complained in the same breath that in Francia, he found bishops who were “drunkards and shiftless men,

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*tempore retineamus...* MGH Epist. III.56 (Berlin, 1916), 312.13-16; trans. Ephraim Emerton in *The Letters of St. Boniface* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 71. (All subsequent translations are Emerton’s.)

<sup>3</sup> *Sine patrocínio principis Francorum nec populum aecclesiae regere nec presbiteros vel clericos, monachos vel ancillas Dei defendere possum; nec ipsos paganorum ritus et sacrilegia idolorum in Germania sine illius mandato et timore prohibere valeo.* MGH Epist. III.63, 329.14-17 (93-94).

<sup>4</sup> Riché 85.

given to hunting and to fighting in the army like soldiers and by their own hands shedding blood, whether of heathens or Christians.”<sup>5</sup> By strengthening the connection between the Frankish church and Rome, Boniface intended to impose stricter controls on the behavior of these offenders. One of his actions was to re-emphasize the Roman archiepiscopal system in the West, under which groups of bishoprics were placed under the authority of a metropolitan archbishop. It was standard practice in Boniface’s native England but seemed to have fallen by the wayside in the Frankish domains.<sup>6</sup> While royal influence was still brought to bear on the selection of candidates, only the pope could bestow the archbishop’s sign of office, the *pallium*.<sup>7</sup>

Pepin and Carloman supported his reforming efforts, but cautiously, as they needed the political support of their “secular” clerics.<sup>8</sup> The legislation enacted under the Pippinid (early Carolingian) rulers suggests that an uneasy balance was starting to develop between piety and *realpolitik*, though one needs to read between the lines to perceive it. The second canon of the *Concilium Germanicum* of 742 reiterated and elaborated upon

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<sup>5</sup> *Et inveniuntur quidam inter eos episcopi, qui, licet dicant se fornicarios vel adulteros non esse, sed sunt ebriosi et incuriosi vel venatores, et qui pugnant in exercitu armati et effundebant propria manu sanguinem hominum, sive paganorum sive christianorum.* MGH Epist. III.50, 300.13-16 (58).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas F.X. Noble, introduction to Emerton, xxi. Becher (p.36) contends that the office of “archbishop” replaced that of “metropolitan,” but it is unclear how he comes by this distinction of terminology. Emerton’s translation seems to use the titles interchangeably (see, for example, letter LXII, p.115).

<sup>7</sup> Becher 36.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 117-118.

the ban on armed clerics. Carloman's publication of this decree was couched in unyielding terms:

We have absolutely forbidden the servants of God to carry arms or fight, to enter the army or march against an enemy, except only so many as are especially selected for divine service such as celebrating Mass or carrying relics—that is to say: the prince may have one or two bishops with the chaplains, and each prefect one priest to hear confessions and prescribe penance. We have also forbidden the servants of God to hunt or wander about the woods with dogs or to keep hawks or falcons.<sup>9</sup>

Boniface probably had in mind warlike bishops such as Milo of Trier, who had won influence in the Frankish church as partisans of Charles Martel, when he convinced Carloman to back these regulations. However, the specific exemption for priests seeing to the troops' spiritual needs or carrying holy relics before the army seems to represent an important concession to the ruler's wishes.<sup>10</sup>

The results of the Council of Soissons in 744, under Pepin's auspices as ruler of Western Francia, give an indication of how far removed Boniface's ideal was from the reality of Carolingian military practice. In what Prinz calls a "stagnation of Bonifacian reform," neither the ban on clerics going armed in general nor the prohibition against

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<sup>9</sup> *Servis Dei per omnia omnibus, armaturam portare vel pugnare aut in exercitum et in hostem pergere, omnino prohibuimus, nisi illi tantummodo, qui propter divinum ministerium missarum scilicet sollemnia adimplenda et sanctorum patrocinia portanda, ad hoc electi sunt. Id est: unum vel duos episcopos cum capellanis presbiteris princeps secum habeat, et unusquisque praefectus unum presbiterum; qui hominibus peccata confitentibus iudicare et indicare poenitentiam possint. Nec non et illas venationes et silvaticas vagationes cum canibus omnibus servis Dei interdiximus; similiter, ut acceptores et walcones non habeant.* MGH Epist. III.56, 310.22-29 (69-70).

<sup>10</sup> Prinz 8-9 passim.

their participation in combat was re-emphasized here. A provision was made that enjoined *abbati legitimi* (i.e., not lay abbots) from going to war. Otherwise, the best that could be managed at Soissons was a ruling in the third canon that clerics should not wear lay clothing. The bans of 742 were repeated at Boniface's Frankish council of 747 and again at the one called by Pepin in 756 at Verberie, showing how routine they had become.<sup>11</sup> Yet these were not simply hollow exercises in moral indignation, but real attempts by the church to influence the conditions of the ongoing wars against the Franks' most immediate and threatening pagan enemies. Boniface himself met his martyrdom at the hands of the Frisians in 755. As the story was told afterwards by his hagiographer Willibald, he had ordered the soldiers in his entourage to lay down their weapons,<sup>12</sup> thus disarming the men whose duty it was to fight where a bishop could not. It is doubtful that the saint would have appreciated the irony.

On Pepin's death in 768, the Frankish kingdom passed to his two eldest sons Carloman and Charles. Carloman predeceased his brother three years later, much as his namesake uncle had done. King Charles, of course, became Charles the Great, the man best known to the Western world by his French appellation Charlemagne. He was a larger-than-life figure whom Simon MacLean rightly calls "the hero of the [Carolingian]

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<sup>11</sup> Prinz 9-10. Lay abbots were a prominent feature of the Carolingian political landscape. In the sources analyzed below, it is often impossible to tell from the text at face value whether such-and-such an abbot who went to war was in fact a tonsured cleric, or simply a secular beneficiary of royal favor.

<sup>12</sup> Willibald *Vita Bonifatii* (MGH SSrG 57.I [Hannover, 1905]), 8.49-50.

story.”<sup>13</sup> While Charlemagne oversaw extensive contributions to culture, scholarship and art, initiating the so-called Carolingian Renaissance, the fire that burned hottest during his kingship was that of war and conquest. His most notable military achievements included the defeat of the nomadic Avars, the conquest of the Lombard kingdom of Italy, and the subjugation and conversion of the Saxons in a bitterly fought war that lasted more than thirty years, almost literally a lifetime’s work. The climax of his story took place on Christmas Day of 800 when he was crowned Emperor of the Romans—reluctantly, according to his biographer Einhard—by Pope Leo III.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Simon MacLean, introduction to *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Einhard *Vita Karoli Magni*, ed. G. Waitz (MGH SSrG 25 [Hannover, 1911]), 28.32-33.



#### 4. THE LINGERING MORAL DILEMMA OF CHRISTIAN WAR

Warfare in the early Carolingian period was characterized by the great conquests of Charles Martel and Charlemagne in which substantial royal armies met the Muslim threat and conquered the peoples of its Eastern periphery. Having overcome the enemies at hand, the Franks could expand their dominion no further.<sup>1</sup> By Charlemagne's death in 814, the Frankish empire encompassed a million square kilometers.<sup>2</sup> It was as well for the survival of this domain that the emperor's two eldest legitimate sons, Charles the Younger and Carloman, predeceased him and let the imperial title pass to their younger brother Louis the Pious. Louis' reign as sole king ameliorated the problems of partible inheritance for a generation but by no means solved them. Before his death in 840, he designated his son Lothar as his successor. Lothar's brothers Charles the Bald and Louis the German disputed the settlement and allied against him. Their inability to come to terms brought a resurgence of the kind of bloody internecine warfare seen under the Merovingians. The three met near the *villa* of Fontenoy in 841. In the words of the chronicler of Fulda, they "...decided that the issue should be determined by the sword and subjected to God's judgment. On June 25 a great battle was fought between them,

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<sup>1</sup> Reuter, *Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare* 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> MacLean 1.

and there was such slaughter on both sides that no one can recall a greater loss among the Frankish people in the present age.”<sup>3</sup>

Fontenoy illuminates the quandary that still faced the warriors of Christendom in the early medieval period, even though Augustine had smoothed the way for the acceptance of war into the Christian worldview as a necessary evil. Defensive or even preemptive warfare against pagan enemies had taken on an aura of spiritual redemption long before Pope Urban II preached crusade in 1095. John VIII (872-882) wrote to a group of Frankish bishops in 878 that the faithful who died fighting pagans and unbelievers would attain eternal life.<sup>4</sup> John X (914-928) boasted in a letter to Archbishop Hermann of Cologne that he had twice put his own life at risk for the good of Christianity doing battle with the Saracens.<sup>5</sup> Yet the necessity of waging large-scale war against fellow Christians, increasingly the norm after the death of Louis the Pious, still presented a moral problem. One way in which Carolingian society assuaged its collective guilt was to regard battle as a trial by combat before the judgment of God, as stated explicitly by

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<sup>3</sup> *...et Dei iudicio causam examinandam decreverunt. Factumque est inter eos VII. Kal. Iulii proelium ingens et tanta caedes ex utraque parte, ut numquam aetas praesens tantam stragem in gente Francorum factam antea meminerit. Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F. Kurze (MGH SSrG 7 [Hannover, 1891]) 841.32.17-21. Trans. Timothy Reuter in *The Annals of Fulda* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 19.

<sup>4</sup> MGH Epist. VII.150 (Berlin, 1928), 126. Cited in David Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War, c. 300-1215* (Warfare in History, gen. ed. Matthew Bennett [Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2003]), 60; also McGiffert 337.

<sup>5</sup> *Scribit praeterea, 'Saracenos, qui sexaginta iam annis terram Romanam vastassent, et quasi propriam possedissent, dissipatos esse, se ipsum corpusque suum opponendo et secunda vice per se ipsum proelium ineundo.'* P. Jaffé, ed., *Regesta pontifica romanorum* I.450.3556 (Leipzig: Veit, 1885); cited in Prinz, 143.

the writer Nithard as well as the anonymous chronicler at Fulda. This was a super-expanded version of the judicial duel between two individuals in which God's grace could only permit the rightful party to win, the legal ordeal most preferred by Europe's warrior aristocracy into the fifteenth century. Karl Leyser gives these Carolingian wars of division as the custom's starting point.<sup>6</sup> Phillipe Contamine traces the use of both group combat and single combat between opposing commanders or champions to older Germanic origins, as recorded by Gregory of Tours.<sup>7</sup> No matter how deep its roots, the idea of war as an appeal to God's justice gained an even firmer foothold in the ninth century and was conspicuous well into the eleventh. Contemporary writers recorded divine judgment in the Normans' capture of Pope Leo IX at Civitate in 1053, the victory at Hastings in 1066, and the death of the anti-king Rudolph of Rheinfelden, nemesis of Emperor Henry IV, at Grone in 1080. These battles also helped reinforce the papal doctrine of declaring the *fideles Sancti Petri* who died in arms martyrs assured of salvation and helped lay the groundwork for the First Crusade.<sup>8</sup> During the Carolingian period, however, this view of battle as trial-by-ordeal was a somewhat passive solution to the moral dilemma of intra-Christian violence and not universally accepted.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Leyser, *Moral Debate* 192.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Tours *Historia Francorum* VII.14 and VII.32; cited in Contamine, 260.

<sup>8</sup> Leyser, *Moral Debate* 192-193.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 192.

Regardless of how the church managed to justify warfare in general, its first mission was the salvation of soldiers' souls. The root problem was that killing even in a "sanctioned" conflict was still technically a sin. To this the church took a more active approach, namely, the assignment of post-battle penance. This applied at the individual level, even when the individuals involved numbered in the thousands. The idea that penance should be tailored specifically to killing done in war grew out of the changing views from the fifth through the seventh centuries on penitence as a whole. Penance for early Christians was seen as a single life-changing act, much like a pilgrimage or the taking of a vow, following which the individual was admitted into the company of the faithful and expected to abstain from sin from then on. Backsliders were rejected from the fold. This was clearly impractical for ordinary men and women who were unprepared to follow a pseudo-clerical lifestyle, but particularly so for soldiers in the late Roman army who wished to convert and at the same time heed the words of St. Paul and remain in their calling. Compromise came in the form of so-called penitentials or "tariff books," schedules of short-term penance that could be performed as needed, which were developed first in Irish and then English monasteries during the seventh century. These lists usually laid down much lighter penalties for killing in war than for that done in ordinary civilian life and the distinction seems to have existed quite early.<sup>10</sup> It hinged not only on the aegis of the *bellum justum*, but also on the mindset of the offender. Just as

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<sup>10</sup> D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War* 28-30 passim, and Contamine 266. It should be noted that the Anglo-Saxons did not practice judicial combat between individuals (Leyser, *Warfare* 192); it seems likely by extension that they did not apply the view to the clash of armies either.

Augustine required that a just war waged by a Christian prince be motivated by the public good and not by greed, vainglory or cruelty, so a man who took a life in battle could only do so from the purest of motives to be considered innocent of murder. The influential theologian Rabanus Maurus, abbot of Fulda and a critic of Louis the German at the time of Fontenoy, accepted the possibility that such a soldier might exist; but given the tendency of man towards avarice, the root of all evil, he thought it highly unlikely. Some saw the justice of the cause as sufficient to expiate the sin of killing for it, but Rabanus, in a letter written after the battle, questioned whether soldiers who were “just following orders” were truly innocent in God’s eyes.<sup>11</sup> The bishops from the armies of Charles the Bald and Louis the German at Fontenoy seemed to have agreed. Nithard recorded that they imposed a three-day fast as a penance for all who fought.<sup>12</sup> Regino of Prüm reiterated the position of Rabanus in 906,<sup>13</sup> as apparently did Burchard of Worms circa 1020.<sup>14</sup> The most prominent example may be the highly detailed penance imposed by the bishops of Normandy in 1067 on the victors at Hastings.<sup>15</sup> However, by this point, the

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<sup>11</sup> MGH Epist. V.32 (Berlin, 1899), 464; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War* 99, and Contamine, 268.

<sup>12</sup> Nithard *Historiarum Libri IV* III.1 (MGH SSrG 44 [Hannover, 1907]), 28-29; cited in Contamine, 265.

<sup>13</sup> Regino of Prüm *De synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis* 50, ed. F.G.A. Wasserschleben (Graz, 1964), 233-4; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War*, 99.

<sup>14</sup> Leyser, *Moral Debate* 196. Although he does not cite a specific text by Burchard as a source, he probably refers to the *Decretum*.

<sup>15</sup> *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church A.D. 871-1204*, ed. D. Whitelock et al (Oxford, 1981), II: 583-4; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War*, 102.

contradictory practice of praising warriors for defending Christianity while simultaneously treating them as murderers was falling out of fashion. The problem began to be addressed by Pope Alexander II in 1063 in a letter to the clergy of Volturno allowing men of that city to kill Muslims in Spain without the taint of homicide.<sup>16</sup> This was not yet a license to kill fellow Christians in combat, as Alexander's own legate confirmed the penance imposed on the Normans seven years later (and this even though William the Conqueror had invaded under the papal banner!).<sup>17</sup> However, Bishop Anselm of Lucca, a partisan of Gregory VII, used the writings of Gregory the Great and Augustine to argue that war against schismatics and heretics could be fought without sin<sup>18</sup> and referred specifically to the fight against the forces of Emperor Henry IV in 1084.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, Gregorian reform brought about an end to the automatic sacrality of war. Following the treatment of war in Gratian's *Decretum* circa 1140, "the single most important and influential canon law text of the twelfth century"—specifically, *questio* 5 of *causa* 23, which also relied heavily on Augustine to disprove the sinfulness of authorized killing—the use of post-battle penance for homicide disappeared altogether.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Epistolae pontificum Romanorum ineditae*, ed. S. Löwenfeld (repr. Graz, 1959), 43; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War*, 103.

<sup>17</sup> D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War* 102, 104.

<sup>18</sup> Anselm of Lucca *Collectio canonum* 13; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War*, 104.

<sup>19</sup> Bardone *Vita Anselmi episcopi Lucensis*, ed. Roger Wilmans (MGH SS 12 [Hannover, 1856]), 20; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War*, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Gratian *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. Aemilius Friedberg (Leipzig, 1879), 928-32, 945; cited in D. Bachrach, *Conduct of War*, 105-6.

## 5. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FOR CAROLINGIAN CHURCHMEN IN COMBAT

Without an intensive scouring of primary source documents beyond the scope of the present study, it may not be possible to pinpoint exactly when a Frankish king first tasked his greater church lords with military duties beyond the basic one to defend each his *civitas*. Given the extent of his campaigns, it is likely that Charles Martel required landholding bishops and abbots to contribute troops to the royal host. Pepin and Carloman certainly summoned them to war in person frequently enough to draw the ire of reformers, as borne out by the complaints of Boniface and the rulings from the *Germanicum* and Soissons. Charlemagne was not an impious man and he enjoyed a good relationship with the Roman church—he considered Pope Hadrian I, whose unusually long reign (772-795) dovetailed with his own, a close friend—but he was also as pragmatic as his father and grandfather had been and not one to compromise his military needs for the sake of doctrine. Given his interest in the spiritual welfare of the troops on his numerous campaigns, he could scarcely toe a strict Bonifacian line and ban his clergy from the field altogether. A capitulary dated early in his reign seems to have been a word-for-word reiteration of his uncle Carloman's bans of the *Concilium Germanicum* of 742, but its authenticity is questionable.<sup>1</sup> Hadrian, otherwise a cooperative partner in Carolingian policy, wrote that in no case could he authorize churchmen to take an active role in combat. If the king insisted on taking bishops and abbots with him on campaign, they should assiduously pray, preach and hear confessions,

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<sup>1</sup> MGH Cap. I.19 (Hannover, 1883), 44; cited in Prinz, 11.

wielding a spiritual sword and not an earthly one (an interpretation of Christ's "two swords" from Luke 22:38).<sup>2</sup> In practice, Charles applied the rules formulated by Boniface and clarified by Hadrian only to the "other ranks" of the clergy, the presbyters and deacons, and not to the bishops and abbots. Not only were the latter indispensable to him in terms of the armed men they could provide, their noble status played no small part in how they were treated in royal law. Social stratification within the church hierarchy had been reflected by the synods of the sixth and seventh centuries, which provided a sliding scale of penance according to rank and spoke to bishops specifically in their bans. Now under Charles, it seems clear that the "noble church" and the "clerical church" had evolved into separate entities.<sup>3</sup>

In any case, it seemed to have been *de rigueur* for Charlemagne's church vassals to lead their own contingents.<sup>4</sup> The numerous exemptions granted them indicate that this was the norm and speak to the consequences of active participation in combat, not merely spiritual duties in the field.<sup>5</sup> In the following letter dated circa 804-11, the emperor summons one Abbot Fulrad to a muster of the royal army at Stassfurt in eastern Saxony. The personal readiness that is apparently expected of Fulrad himself (noted in italics) and the logistics entailed in mobilizing an armed company are illustrative:

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<sup>2</sup> MGH Epist. III.88, *Codex Carolinus* 784-791 (Berlin, 1892), 625; cited in Prinz, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Prinz 12.

<sup>4</sup> It should be emphasized that these troops were composed only of their lay tenants, never their clerical subordinates, in keeping with the letter of the bans if not the intent.

<sup>5</sup> Prinz 11.



Come, accordingly, *so equipped with your men* to the aforesaid place that thence you may be able to go well prepared in any direction whither our summons shall direct; that is, *with arms and gear also, and other equipment for war in food and clothing*. So that each horseman shall have a shield, lance, sword, dagger, bow and quivers with arrows; and in your carts utensils of various kinds, that is, axes, planes, augers, boards, spades, iron shovels, and other utensils which are necessary in an army. In the carts also supplies of food for three months, dating from the time of the assembly, arms and clothing for a half-year. And we command this in general, that you cause it to be observed that you proceed peacefully to the aforesaid place, through whatever part of our realm your journey shall take you, that is, that you presume to take nothing except fodder, wood and water; and let the men of each one of your vassals march along with the carts and horsemen, and let the leader always be with them until they reach the aforesaid place, so that the absence of a lord may not give an opportunity to his men of doing evil.<sup>6</sup>

Even if the sight of an abbot or bishop clapping on his helmet and mustering his men to join the royal army was commonplace, it did not mean that all Carolingian church lords were comfortable with the idea of clerical military service. The exemptions that Charlemagne granted from their duties are one indicator of this. Some were not afraid to express their unease on parchment, even if they were not prepared to openly resist the royal prerogative. In a letter dated to 789-790, Paulinus, patriarch of Aquilea, begged Charlemagne to let his priests fight only in “God’s camp,” i.e., with prayer, in accordance with Christ’s admonition in Matthew 6:24 that no man may serve two masters.<sup>7</sup> Bishop Claudius of Turin, a courtier of Louis the Pious, bemoaned the division of his energies

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<sup>6</sup> Charlemagne, *Letter of Charles to Abbot Fulrad*, trans. D.C. Munro (in *Translations and Reprints from the original Sources of European History*, Dept. of History of the University of Pennsylvania, VI, No. 5 [1900]: 11-12).

<sup>7</sup> MGH Epist. IV.18a (Berlin, 1895), 525; cited in Prinz, 11-12. The dating is Prinz’s; the MGH gives a broad range from 776-802.

when he wrote in 820, "...in spring, with my parchments under my arm, I go down to the coast to fight the sons of Hagar [Arabs] and the Moors. By day, I put my sword to work, and by night I employ my books and my pen."<sup>8</sup> Lupus Servatus, abbot of Ferrières under Charles the Bald, protested in a letter to his friend Bishop Pardulus that he was out of his depth whenever he had to answer the royal call-up, as he had "...not learned how to strike an enemy nor parry a blow, nor indeed to execute all the other duties of the infantry and cavalry, but our king does not need soldiers alone."<sup>9</sup> In another missive, on hearing that some of the men serving Odo of Corbie had been wounded in action, he admonished his young brother-abbot, "I am deeply concerned for you too, when I remember that you often rush out heedlessly into the midst of danger unarmed, incited by youthful prowess and a desire to win... I therefore urge you... to leave to professional soldiers the use of instruments of battle."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Post medium veris procedendo armatus pergamenis pariter cum arma ferens, pergo ad excubias maritimas cum timore excubando adversas Agarenos et Mauros; nocte tenens gladium et die libros et calamus, implere conans ceptum desiderium.* MGH Epist. IV.6 (Berlin, 1895), 601.19-22; trans. Riché, 86.

<sup>9</sup> *Ego, ut nostis, hostem ferire ac vitare non didici, nec vero cetera pedestris ac equestris militae officia exequi, nec rex noster solis bellatoribus indiget.* MGH Epist. VI.78 (Berlin, 1925), 71.14-16; trans. Graydon W. Regenos in *The Letters of Lupus of Ferrières* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 72. Cited in Riché, 86.

<sup>10</sup> *Ingenti quoque vestri cura sollicitor, cum vos inermes incaute in media discrimina prorumpere solitos recogito, in quae iuvenilem agilitatem vincendi rapit aviditas. Proinde benigna devotione suadeo, ut, sola dispositione contenti, quae tantummodo vestro proposito congruit, armatos exequi permittatis, quod instrumentis bellicis profitentur.* MGH Epist. VI.111 (Berlin, 1925), 95.34-96.3; trans. Regenos, 106. Cited in Riché, 86.

If the words of Lupus and Claudius may be taken at face value, they stand as examples of two of the modes in which a Carolingian churchman might have participated in war: in a position of unarmed leadership in the field, following the letter of canon law if not the spirit, or literally fighting the enemy with sword in hand, giving as good as he got. Even if a bishop or abbot marched with the army only to perform the spiritual functions of the priesthood, as Pope Hadrian had insisted, the theater of war could be equally dangerous to all men regardless of rank or vocation. The sources discussed below contain numerous passages that put clerics physically present in a battle and at risk for their lives, armed or not, and such citations frequently take the form of a death notice.

A brief examination of the Carolingian sources is called for before proceeding to the Ottonian period, as they form both a historiography and a literary tradition upon which the later writers drew. These documents may be distinguished from one another by the backgrounds and agendas of their respective authors, but taken together by the authors' common attitude towards war and the language they use to describe it. They are, in roughly chronological order: the *Annales regni Francorum* (*Royal Frankish Annals*), the core work for the deeds of the early Carolingian monarchs; Nithard's *Historiarum libri IV* (four books of history), the most important source for the wars between the sons of Louis the Pious;<sup>11</sup> and three of the four major narrative sources for the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, namely, the *Annales Bertiniani* (annals of St-Bertin), the *Annales Fuldensis*

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<sup>11</sup> Bernhard Walter Scholz, introduction to *Carolingian Chronicles* (The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 21.

(annals of Fulda), and the *Chronicon* of Regino of Prüm.<sup>12</sup> These works collectively cover the years 741 through 906, but the coverage is imperfect, sometimes lacking and sometimes, as the writers reiterated earlier writers or echoed one another, redundant. They must also have drawn on other works that we no longer possess. Those sources that have survived are, in Reuter's words, the "fossilized remains of Frankish political discussions."<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the colorful testimony of Claudius and Lupus, the evidence provided by the five narrative sources for actual fighting done by bishops or tonsured (as opposed to lay) abbots is minimal and indirect at best.

One should also be aware that none of these accounts should be taken as gospel truth. The notion of historiographical or journalistic impartiality was unknown to the period. All of these chronicles "were written to advance the specific political agendas of their authors, and they therefore are full of biases, inaccuracies, lacunae, and selective presentations of historical events."<sup>14</sup> In order to arrive at an accurate and comprehensive historical picture, the modern scholar must fact-check the narratives against one another and supplement them with numerous other source documents. Fortunately for the purposes of the present study, these same viewpoints and biases are as useful as the raw facts they present (or omit). This assumes that none of the authors discussed below went

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<sup>12</sup> MacLean, intro. to *History and Politics* 3. The fourth major source cited by MacLean, the *Annals of St. Vaast*, has as of this writing been translated only into modern French—a language of which this author, regrettably, has no command.

<sup>13</sup> Reuter, intro. to *The Annals of Fulda* 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Eric J. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 15-16.

so far as to fabricate any part of their account altogether. Current scholarship does not seem to give any indication that this was the case.

*Annales regni Francorum*, a.741-829

If Charlemagne did not directly order the creation of these *Annales*, he certainly encouraged it. Based on the insider's viewpoint and a one-sided writing style (e.g., the omission of significant Frankish defeats, such as the storied debacle at the Pass of Roncesvalle), Leopold von Ranke argued that the *ARF* must have originated from a court source or sources and must perforce have been an official chronicle.<sup>15</sup> Not that such "spin" made for any shortage of warfare upon which to report. War was a constant and the king was obliged to launch at least one major campaign each year in order to maintain an image of strength, with the usual mission being punitive economic warfare against the Saxons or Slavs. This was seen as right and proper and such terms as "plundering" and "laying waste" were never pejorative when applied to Frankish action. "The king's despotism," declares translator Bernard Scholz, "[was] restrained by his scanty resources rather than by the ethics of his political ideology."<sup>16</sup> When Charles sought to keep the rebellious Bavarians in line, he even applied for papal forgiveness in advance:

If the duke in his stubbornness intended to disobey the word of the pope [Hadrian] entirely, then the Lord King Charles and his army would be absolved from any

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<sup>15</sup> Scholtz, intro. to *Carolingian Chronicles*, 4-5 passim.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

peril of sin, and the guilt of whatever burning, murder, and other atrocities might occur in his country should then fall upon Tassilo and his supporters, and the Lord King Charles and the Franks would remain innocent.<sup>17</sup>

Hand in hand with this matter-of-fact brutality is an absence of overtly religious language in the criticism of the Franks' non-Christian enemies. While the Saxons and Slavs are frequently condemned as incurably treacherous and deserving of every punishment they receive, they are hardly ever described as pagans or enemies of Christianity. Yet while Scholz finds that the *ARF* does not present the hand of God "as the immediate cause of political events,"<sup>18</sup> there are passages (particularly by the attributed author of 741-795) where the constant interjection of God's help on the battlefield<sup>19</sup> becomes so tiresome that one wonders if the writer credited the Franks with any successes of their own.

Notwithstanding the wide span of time it covers, the *ARF* is a thin source of evidence for the military acts of bishops and abbots. Only two instances can be noted. The first is the death of Archbishop Hildegard of Cologne in the castle of Iburg during Pepin's 753

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<sup>17</sup> ...*et si ipse dux obdurato corde verbis supradicti apostolici minime oboedire voluisset, tunc domnus Carolus rex et suus exercitus absoluti fuissent ab omni periculo peccati, et quicquid in ipsa terra factum eveniebat in incendiis aut in homicidiis vel in quaecumque malitia, ut hoc super Tassilonem et eius consentaneis evenisset et domnus rex Carolus ac Franci innoxii ab omni culpa exinde permansissent. Annales regni Francorum*, ed. F. Kurze (MGH SSrG 6 [Hannover, 1895]), a.787.76.16-23 (trans. Bernhard Walter Scholz with Barbara Rogers in *Carolingian Chronicles*, 65).

<sup>18</sup> Scholz, intro. to *Carolingian Chronicles* 9.

<sup>19</sup> *ARF* a.774-6 passim, 39-48.

invasion of Saxony,<sup>20</sup> suggesting that he may have been part of a garrison of occupation. The other, near the end of the *Annales* ' time span, is the case of Abbot Helisachar, the chancellor of Louis the Pious. He was titular command of the Spanish March campaign of 827 though not necessarily in actual command, as he went in company with two counts.<sup>21</sup> Aside from these two named individuals, the authors of the *ARF* seemed to have thought it unnecessary to touch on the military roles of church lords, no doubt leaving it to their well-informed audience to read between the lines.

Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, a.814-843

Nithard's *Four Books of History* (more simply, *Histories*) likewise gives few examples of fighting churchmen, but not, as in the case of the *ARF*, due to brevity of style. Nithard was a lay noble, not a churchman, with actual combat experience. He fought at Fontenoy and would die in battle against the Normans in 845, which sets him apart from the other chroniclers. This does not seem to have affected the content in question *per se*. The first book of the *Historiarum* sums up Frankish deeds from 814 to 839, giving a perfunctory backdrop to the events that occurred during Nithard's own adult life. The second and third books are something of a personal testimony embedded in a greater narrative, rich in scope and detail. This tight focus, particularly on the

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<sup>20</sup> *In qua expeditione Hildigarius archiepiscopus interfectus est in monte, qui dicitur Iuburg. ARF a.753.11.8-9.*

<sup>21</sup> *Imperator Helisachar presbyterum et abbatem et cum eo Hildebrandum atque Donatum comites ad motus Hispanicae marcae componendos misit. ARF a.827.172.6-9.*

month-to-month events of the years 840 through 843, perforce limits the quantity of relevant examples to be found therein but not the quality. Nithard was a partisan of Charles the Bald but not an uncritical mouthpiece. As the wars between the sons of Louis the Pious dragged on, he seems to have lost his enthusiasm for recording them—he prefaces book three by declaring himself ashamed of what he has to tell about the Frankish people<sup>22</sup>—yet he stuck with his task for the sake of leaving an accurate record to posterity, at least so far as it favored his sovereign’s position.<sup>23</sup> It seems likely that he was affected more deeply by his direct, “unfiltered” experience with battle than might have been a churchman who led troops in the field but not shed blood in person. As one would expect from a man born and bred to bear arms, he makes no criticism of war *qua* war. (The things that offended him most deeply were breach of faith and defiance of public authority,<sup>24</sup> much as destruction of church property and blasphemy by pagans were the *bêtes noires* of the clerical writer.)

Nithard makes but four mentions of churchmen in a military context. When Charles the Bald attempts to cross the Seine in March of 841, he is prevented from doing so by a blocking force left there by Lothar that included many contingents raised from the lands of abbots and bishops.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Lothar assigns Bishop Otgar of Mainz to help

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<sup>22</sup> Nithard *Historiarum Libri IV*, ed. E. Müller (MGH SSrG 44 [Hannover, 1907]), III.27-28.

<sup>23</sup> Scholz, intro. to *Carolingian Chronicles* 26.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>25</sup> *Cumque Sequanam venisset, repperit... omnes a Carbonariis et infra comites, abbates, episcopos, ob hoc videlicet a Lodhario inibi relictos...* Nithard II.6.19.25-28.



subjugate Louis the German, “since [he] has a mortal hatred of Louis.”<sup>26</sup> Otgar reappears in February of 842 to block Louis from crossing the Rhine,<sup>27</sup> and again in March when Louis and Charles cross the Moselle in force and drive him and his co-commanders off.<sup>28</sup> In a text otherwise barren of such anecdotes, these three mentions by name of an individual bishop in a four-year span demonstrate the significant contributions a church magnate could make to Carolingian strategy and give a tantalizing glimpse into how personal such work might have been. Otgar seems to have received his command not necessarily based on his duty or ability, but because he hated his lord’s enemy.

*Annales Bertiniani*, a.830-882

The *Annals of St-Bertin*, as with many medieval manuscripts, was named for the eponymous monastery that held it longest, which place had nothing to do with its writing. It began as a semi-official chronicle of the Carolingian court penned by palace clergy, picking up where the composition of the *ARF* had stalled out due to a rebellion in 829,

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<sup>26</sup> *In quo negotio congrue Otgarium Magontiae sedis episcopum et Adhelbertum Metensium comitem convocat; habebat enim uterque Lodhuvicum ad mortem usque exosum.* Nithard II.7.21.2-5 (trans. Scholtz and Rogers 148).

<sup>27</sup> *...quod Otgarius Maguntiae sedis episcopus una cum ceteris Lodhuwico fratri suo transitum ad se prohibuisset...* Nithard III.4.35.3-5.

<sup>28</sup> *Quod cum Otgarius Mogontiae sedis episcopus, Hatto comes, Herioldus ceterique viderunt, quos Lodharius ob hoc inibi reliquerat, ut illis transitum prohibuissent, timore perterriti litore relicto fugerunt.* Nithard III.7.39.7-11.

but did not remain so for long.<sup>29</sup> After the battle of Fontenoy, its writing continued in the household of Charles the Bald. From 843 to 860, the sole author seemed to have been one Prudentius, later bishop of Troyes and an opponent of the king. Hincmar, bishop of Reims, then took up the pen in 866. Unlike the relatively dry and anonymous writing in the *ARF*, the style of the *AB* strongly reflects the personality and opinions of each of these respective men. It is also a healthy source of evidence for militant churchmen. One of the most notable passages describes the rout of Charles the Bald by Pippin II in 844. Three church magnates are cited by name as being captured, and two killed, including Hugh, abbot of St-Quentin and St-Bertin and an illegitimate son of Charlemagne.<sup>30</sup> As his epitaph would have it, he was found naked—no doubt stripped by looters—on the field.<sup>31</sup> Being killed in the thick of the action and then violated afterwards, however, does not necessarily indicate that Hugh died bearing arms himself.

Prudentius give only a roster of the casualties here without offering opinions. He is, however, more likely to show sympathy for parties in whose cause he found justice. In one passage, he is unusually frank and explicit about the suffering of the commons during a time of strife:

...the Breton Nominoë and Lambert... slew Rainald duke of Nantes, and took large numbers of prisoners. So many and such great disasters followed, while

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<sup>29</sup> Janet Nelson, introduction to *The Annals of St-Bertin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 2-5 passim.

<sup>30</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. G. Waitz (MGH SSrG 5 [Hannover, 1883]), a.844.31.6-7.

<sup>31</sup> MGH Poet. Lat. II.139; cited in Nelson, 58, fn 10.

brigands ravaged everything everywhere, that people in many areas throughout Gaul were reduced to eating earth mixed with a little bit of flour and made into a sort of bread. It was a crying shame—no, worse, a most execrable crime—that there was plenty of fodder for the horses of those brigands while human beings were short of even tiny crusts of earth-and-flour mixture.<sup>32</sup>

Prudentius also uses religious language frequently, apt to cite “the help of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (*domini nostri Iesu Christi auxilio*) as the cause for victory over pagan enemies.<sup>33</sup> He tends to call Viking and Muslim raiders “pirates” (*pyratae*) throughout rather than pagans (even the “Greeks,” i.e., Byzantines, are so called), and savage, immoral behavior is expected of them and generally reported without excitement. The one exception is quite zealous:

The Saracens, their ships loaded down with the vast quantity of treasures they had taken from St. Peter’s basilica, were on their way home, when during the sea-voyage they blasphemed with their foul mouths against God and our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. Suddenly there arose a terrible storm from which they could not escape, their ships were dashed against each other, and all were lost.<sup>34</sup>

The depredations of foreign enemies had become a common part of the 9<sup>th</sup> century landscape, which did not prevent Prudentius from complaining at every opportunity that

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<sup>32</sup> ...*Nomenogius Britto et Landbertus... Rainaldum Namnetorum ducum interficiunt, complures capiunt. Emergentibus igitur hinc inde tot tantisque incessabiliter malis, vastante passim cuncta raptore, coacti sunt per multa totius Galliae loca homines terram mixta paucitate farinae atque in panis speciem redactam comedere. Eratque lacrimabile, immo execrabile nimium facinus, ut iumenta raptorum pabulis habundarent et homines ipsius terrenae admixtionis crustulis indigerent.* AB 843.29.18-27 (trans. Nelson 55).

<sup>33</sup> AB a.845.32.24-25; a.848.36.12; a.850.38.17-18.

<sup>34</sup> *Saraceni, oneratis thesaurorum multitudine, quas ex basilica beati Petri apostoli asportarant, navibus, redire conati, cum inter navigandum Deo et domino nostro Iesu Christo eiusque apostolis ore pestifero derogarent, orto repente inevitabili turbine, conlisis in sese navibus, omnes pereunt...* AB a.847.35.14-18 (64).

such-and-such a band of raiders had struck and gotten away “unscathed” (*inpuneque*) or “without meeting any resistance” (*nullo penitus obsistente*).<sup>35</sup> However, he reserved his most strident criticism for offenses by Christians against their own faith. During the invasion of Aquitaine by Charles the Bald in 854, his troops “devoted all their efforts to looting, burning and taking people captive: they did not even restrain their greed and insolence in the case of the churches and altars of God.”<sup>36</sup> One Bodo, a cleric who had converted to Judaism and settled in Muslim Cordoba, “made such... progress in evil that he devoted himself to urging all the Christians living in Spain... that they should abandon Christianity and convert to the insanity of the Jews or the madness of the Saracens...”<sup>37</sup>

Hincmar of Reims shared his unhappiness in both these areas; but whereas Prudentius seems to have seen himself as something of an advocate of a long-suffering Christendom, Hincmar wrote unapologetically from (and for) the self-serving view of the ecclesiastical magnate. He had better contact with the court than Prudentius, but intended his words for the gaze of his own circle, not for that of the public and certainly not for the king. He was not above manipulating the truth to fit his agenda.<sup>38</sup> He was certainly not reluctant to snipe at his peers for their shortcomings, both moral and military. He found Hugh,

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<sup>35</sup> *AB* a.844.32.8; a.845.32.15; a.847.35.23; a.848.36.9; a.849.37.11-12; a.852.41.22.

<sup>36</sup> *...eiusque populus praedis, incendiis hominumque captivatibus totum suum laborem impendit nec ab ipsis ecclesiis et altaribus Dei suam cupidatem aut audatiam cohibet. AB* a.854.44.10-13.

<sup>37</sup> *...in tantum mali profecit, ut in omnes christianos Hispaniae... quatenus aut relictas christianae fidei religionis ac Iudeorum insaniam Saracenorumve dementiam se converterent... AB* a.847.34.34-35.3 (64).

<sup>38</sup> Nelson, intro. 11-14 passim.

Lothar's candidate for the see of Cologne, unfit on the grounds that he had only been ordained a subdeacon and lived more like a secular lord than a churchman.<sup>39</sup> Another Hugh, the abbot of St-Martin, campaigned frequently against the Vikings on the Loire, to which Hincmar had no objection so long as he won. Success goes by without note,<sup>40</sup> but a failed attack is called poorly planned (*incaute*).<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Bishop Roland of Arles foolishly (*inconsulte*) got captured by the Saracens when he fortified in haste.<sup>42</sup>

Nothing in these passages suggests that Hincmar took issue with clerical military service in general. There is also nothing to confirm or deny the possibility that the men involved had borne arms in person. However, there is little doubt that if they had done so to Hincmar's knowledge, he would have objected strenuously. The proof lies in his entry for 882, the final year he chronicled before his death, in which he recorded that when the Vikings sacked Cologne and Trier, Bishop Wala of Metz was killed in action, "bearing arms and fighting contrary to sacred authority and the episcopal office."<sup>43</sup> Hincmar's position on churchmen shedding blood could not be clearer. Of all the instances of clerical violence found in the *Annals of St-Bertin*—seven mentions of bishops or tonsured

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<sup>39</sup> ...*Hugoni... tonsura clerico et ordinatione tantummodo subdiacono, moribus autem et vita a fidei laico discrepanti...* AB a.864.71.21-23.

<sup>40</sup> AB a.869.107.5-8.

<sup>41</sup> AB a.871.116.38.

<sup>42</sup> AB a.869.106.24.

<sup>43</sup> ...*et Walam Metensem episcopum, contra sacram auctoritatem et episcopale ministerium armatum et bellantem...* AB a.882.153.8-10 (224).

abbots performing military service, two killed in action, two captured, and four connected to some other kind of armed mayhem— this anecdote is also the only tangible evidence to issue from either Prudentius or Hincmar for a churchman wielding a weapon in battle.

*Annales Fuldensis*, a.838-901

The *Annals of Fulda*, the roughly contemporary East Frankish counterpart to the *Annals of St-Bertin*, were initially written or supervised by Rudolf, monk and scholar, during his tenure at the eponymous monastery from 838-863. When his teacher Abbot Raban was promoted to the see of Mainz, Rudolf followed him thence and continued to write until his death in 865. An anonymous author or authors in the circle of Archbishop Liutbert (863-89) took up the pen thereafter. Because Rudolf had little contact with the court of Louis the German, a reliance entirely on his version of the reign is problematic. It is often vague or lacking in detail and omits important events. The earlier parts of the *AF* should particularly be compared with other texts (as noted above) to fill in the gaps. Rudolf's successor(s) were better informed and wrote about the king's deeds in greater depth, thanks to Liutbert's promotion to royal archchaplain in 870.<sup>44</sup>

Even though the later authors seem to have written from the court perspective rather than the clerical, they had less to say about Western politics than the chroniclers in the

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<sup>44</sup> Goldberg 14-15.

realm of Charles the Bald did about Eastern ones.<sup>45</sup> This more regional focus<sup>46</sup> may explain the greater statistical concentration of fighting churchmen to be found in its pages: fourteen mentions of bishops or tonsured abbots doing military service, three deaths in open battle, and one death in a defensive action. The 870s were notable for regular campaigns against the Slavs and the 880s for clashes with the invading Norse. Certain bishops' names appear again and again in the reports of fighting, bearing out Reuter's assertion that the participation of churchmen in combat was a regular East Frankish practice.<sup>47</sup> The first to be mentioned in this context is Bishop Arn of Würzburg, who was involved in a border action against the Bohemians in 871. The king sent forces against the Moravians and Bohemians in 872. Several clerical leaders are mentioned:

Archbishop Liutbert [of Mainz] was the leader in that [Bohemian] expedition. Those who were sent to assist Carloman, however, Bishop Arn and Sigihart, abbot of the monastery of Fulda, although they fought bravely and pushed the enemy hard, returned with great difficulty after losing many of their men. But while Carloman spread fire and slaughter among the Moravians, Zwentibald sent a large army in secret against the Bavarians who had been left to guard the ships on the bank of the Danube, and overran them... No one escaped from there except for Embricho, bishop of Regensburg, with a few men.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Reuter, introduction to *The Annals of Fulda* 11.

<sup>46</sup> The reader should be wary of interpreting an apparent tilt in East Frankish statistics as a signifier of any sort of political intent on the part of the players. Louis "the German" was a traditional Carolingian king with a greater Carolingian viewpoint, and there is no evidence that he ever meant to found a separate kingdom east of the Rhine with different customs and attitudes, clerical or otherwise (Goldberg 6-7).

<sup>47</sup> Reuter *AF* 91, fn 4.

<sup>48</sup> *In hac expeditione Liutbertus archiepiscopus primatum tenuit. Hi vero, qui Karlmanno missi sunt in auxilium, id est Arn episcopus et Sigihartus abbas Fuldensis monasterii, quamvis fortiter*

Bishop Arn is also noted for repelling Norse raiders in Saxony in 884. Although the chronicler thanks God for the Christian victory, he also leaves the pagan enemy a sidelong compliment: “It is said that Northmen of a beauty and size of body never seen among the Frankish people were killed in this battle.”<sup>49</sup> In the same year, “The Northmen fought the Frisians in a place called Norden and were defeated and many of them killed. There is a letter about this battle, which Rimbart, bishop of the same place, sent to Archbishop Liutbert of Mainz, which runs as follows...”<sup>50</sup> Apparently the Carolingian bishop could include the title of war correspondent amongst his jobs (the letter in question, unfortunately, does not appear in the text or anywhere else.)<sup>51</sup> Archbishop Liutbert fought the Slavs in 872 and 874 and the Norse in 883 and 885, yet his epitaph of 889 makes no reference to his military prowess. “It would be a long story to relate how upright his manner of living was,”<sup>52</sup> says the chronicler, seemingly implying that his deeds in battle were both praiseworthy and so commonplace as to go

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*hostes premendo pugnassent, plurimis tamen suorem amissis cum magna difficultate regressi sunt. Sed dum Karlmannus caedes et incendia in Marahensibus exercuisset, Zuentibald misso clam exercitu copioso Baioarios, qui ad tuendas naves in litore Histri fluminis relictis fuerant, occupavit... nullusque inde nisi Emricho Radesbonae civitatis episcopus cum paucis evasit. Annales Fuldensis*, ed. F. Kurze (MGH SSrG 7 [Hannover, 1891]), a.872.76.17-28 (trans. Reuter 68).

<sup>49</sup> ...sed tamen adiuvante Domino christiani optinuerunt victoriam. In quo certamine tales viri Nordmannis cecidisse referuntur, quales numquam antea in gente Francorum visi fuissent, in pulchritudine videlicet ac proceritate corporum. *AF* a.884.101.1-5 (95).

<sup>50</sup> *AF* a.884.101.28-32 (96).

<sup>51</sup> Reuter *Annals of Fulda* 96, fn 8.

<sup>52</sup> *Cuius vivendi ordo quali probitate maneret, per omnia longum est explicare. AF* a.889.117.15-17 (118).



without saying. The text also mentions that a Bavarian army sent to repulse the Avars in 900 included only one bishop, showing that this was an exception to the rule (Reuter notes that three such were killed at the battle of Preßburg in 907).<sup>53</sup>

The *AF* also reports the death in battle of the aggressive Bishop Wala of Metz, but states only that he “came against [the Norse] rashly with a small army and was killed.”<sup>54</sup> The death of Sunderolt, Liutbert’s successor to Mainz, is cited in nearly identical terms. “[And] in his place,” says the chronicler smugly, “Hatto, abbot of the Reichenau, a man of subtle mind, was made archbishop.”<sup>55</sup> If either of these men had violated the tenets of their office by bearing arms, which offense had so rankled Hincmar, the anonymous author(s) of the later *AF* pay it no mind, seeming rather more annoyed by their failures of tactical judgment. In the same entry as the defeat of Sunderolt, the Mainz chronicler points out that Bishop Embricho of Regensburg, “patient, sober, humble and faithful, died happily of old age.”<sup>56</sup> The fact that his advanced age is mentioned suggests that he is an unusual case.

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<sup>53</sup> Reuter *Annals of Fulda* 141, fn 5.

<sup>54</sup> ...*Walah Mettensis episcopus incaute cum paucis occurens occisus est. AF* a.882.98.1-2 (91).

<sup>55</sup> ...*ibi Sundaroldus Magonciacensis archiepiscopus incaute illis occurrens interfectus est, in cuius locum Haddo abbas Augensis cenobii, homo subtilis ingenii, antistes constituitur. AF* a.891.119.26-29 (121).

<sup>56</sup> *Embricho Regino urbe epsicopus, vir paciens, humilis, sobrius fidusque manebat, gravis etate feliciter diem ultimum clausit. AF* a.891.119.16-18 (121).

Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, a.1-906

Regino, Abbot of Prüm, was the last great historian of the Carolingian Empire. His *Chronicle*, which he dedicated to Bishop Adalbero of Augsburg in 908, is the fourth and final of the major narrative sources for the latter half of the ninth century. No East Frankish chronicler would pick up the pen again for several decades.<sup>57</sup> It is also perhaps the most readable, engaging and lively work of the group, for Regino was both a talented writer and a sharp observer of political and military currents with a surprising appreciation for the nuts-and-bolts details of war (or perhaps, for an East Frankish churchman, not so surprising). He was not, of course, an objective historian in the modern sense. Like his colleagues of the scholarly elite, he saw history not as a neutral scholarly discipline but a means of political argument.<sup>58</sup> He was a war reporter with an agenda and battles to him were parables, means to teach moral lessons that showed how war and politics reflected sin and divine favor.<sup>59</sup>

As was Nithard, Regino was less concerned with the details of past Frankish history than with the events of his own lifetime. Book I of the *Chronicon* “[reduced] the Frankish conquests to terse stories of triumph” up through the death of Charles Martel.<sup>60</sup> He then duplicated the text of the *ARF* through the death of Charlemagne in 814 and paid

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<sup>57</sup> MacLean, introduction to Regino in *History and Politics*, 2, 3, 54.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 33, 44, 46 passim.

<sup>60</sup> MacLean 116, fn 402.

short shrift to the reign of Louis the Pious due to what he claimed is a dearth of worthy material.<sup>61</sup> His writing came into its own with the wars between Louis's heirs.

The ecclesiastical body count includes Wala of Metz in 882, of whose action Regino gives slightly better detail than either Hincmar of Reims or the chronicler of Fulda:

“[The Northmen]... led their host to Metz. When the bishop of the same town learned about this he got together with [arch]Bishop Bertulf [of Trier] and Count Adalhard [of Metz], and, taking the initiative, advanced to engage the enemy. Battle was joined and the Northmen were the victors. The same bishop Wala died in the battle, and the rest fled.”<sup>62</sup>

Simon Maclean suggests that Regino meant Wala's “initiative” as a criticism. If so, he fell defending his own *civitas* and shared responsibility for the defeat with his two co-commanders, which neither the *Annales Bertiniani* nor the *Annales Fuldensis* mention.

It was not, of course, necessary to lead a bold counterattack in order to hold out against a besieging enemy. Bishop Gauzlin of Paris, whom the Mainz author of the *AF* names one of the leading generals of France (*duces praecipui Galliae regionis*),<sup>63</sup> “...had defended the city with all his strength against the unremitting assault of the Northmen. In those days [887], during the oppressions of that very siege, the said bishop Gauzlin

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<sup>61</sup> *Et de Ludowici quidem imperatoris temporibus perpauca litteris comprehendere, quia nec scripta repperi, nec a senioribus, quae digna essent memoriae commendanda, audiui...* Regino of Prüm *Chronicon*, ed. F. Kurze (MGH SSrG 50 [Hannover, 1890]), a.813.73.7-10.

<sup>62</sup> *...Mediomatrico dirigunt aciem. Quod cum comperisset eiusdem urbis antistes, adiuncto sibi Bertulfo episcopo et Adalardo comite ultro illis obviam ad pugnam procedit. Inito certamine Nortmanni victores extiterunt. Isdem Wala episcopus in prelio cecidit, ceteri fugerunt.* Regino a.882.119.12-18 (trans. Maclean 186).

<sup>63</sup> *AF* a.886.104.20-21.

departed from the world...”<sup>64</sup> (Since no direct violence is mentioned, one may assume he died of natural causes, though it seems plausible that the stress of the siege may have played a part.) Following a detailed account of the Norse invasion of Lotharingia in 891, the *Chronicon* records the death of Archbishop Sunzo (Sunderolt). Where the *AF* calls him *incaute*, “rash,” Regino seems to belittle him for not being bold enough: “As the fighting got worse the army of the Christians (oh the shame of it!) committed a sin and retreated. In this battle [arch]Bishop Sunzo [Sunderolt] and Count Arnulf were killed...”<sup>65</sup> He attached no shame to the death of Arn, *ecclesiae venerabilis* of Würzburg, who apparently did not let age slow him down; he died in battle against the Slavs in 892 after having held the bishopric for thirty-seven years.<sup>66</sup> The only prelate whom Regino seems to have blamed for rashness was Abbot Ebolus of St-Denis: “While [he] was storming a certain fortress in Aquitaine too eagerly, he died from a blow by a rock.”<sup>67</sup>

Regino stands apart from the previous chroniclers by providing details of other types of clerical violence, with his opinion varying by circumstance. He seems to approve what amounts to a homicide when he (mistakenly) credits the death of Nominoë,

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<sup>64</sup> ...*Gozlino eiusdem urbis episcopo contra Nortmannorum assiduam inpugnationem civitatem totis viribus tuebatur. His etiam diebus predictus Gozlinus episcopus inter ipsas obsidionum pressuras migravit a seculo...* Regino a.887.126.24-127.3 (195).

<sup>65</sup> ...*et ingravato prelio christianorum exercitus peccatis facientibus, heu pro dolor! terga vertit. In quo prelio episcopus Mogontiacae urbis Sunzo et Arnulfus comes occubuerunt...* Regino a.891.137.15-17 (210-11)

<sup>66</sup> Regino a.892.140.12-15; also Reuter *AF* 215, fn 421.

<sup>67</sup> *Ebulo abba de sancto Dionisio, cum quoddam castrum in Aquitania situm ardentius expugnaret, ictu lapidis periit.* Regino a.893.141.12-13 (216).

rebellious duke of Brittany, to Bishop Maurilio of Angers, who accosted him as he mounted his horse: “‘Desist immediately, cruel bandit, from devastating the churches of God.’ As he was saying these things he raised the staff he was carrying in his hand and struck Nominoë on the head.”<sup>68</sup> However, he is quick to condemn the bloodshed resulting from the so-called Babenberger feud (897-903) between Bishop Rudolf of Würzburg and rival nobles, “a great dispute of discords and implacable controversy of hatreds [that] arose, from the smallest and most trivial matter.”<sup>69</sup> He likewise seems to blame the demise of Archbishop Fulk of Reims during another feud in 903 on his own temper.<sup>70</sup>

All in all, Regino includes eight instances of churchmen providing military service, four of participation in battle, four deaths in offensive actions and one in a defensive one, and an impressive eleven mentions of bishops or abbots connected to other forms of violence. As in the *Annals of Fulda*, the *Chronicon* seems to take the East Frankish perspective that churchmen in battle were quite common, but Regino never explicitly refers to any of them bearing arms.

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<sup>68</sup> ‘*Desine iam, crudelis predo, ecclesias Dei devastare.*’ *His dictis baculum, quem manu gestabat, elevans eum in capite percussit...* Regino a.862.80.6-8 (138).

<sup>69</sup> *...magna discordiarum lis et implacabilis odiorum controversia ex parvis minimisque rebus oritur...* Regino a.897.145.13-14 (221); also Reuter 222, fn 453.

<sup>70</sup> Regino a.903.149-50.

## SUMMARY

Hanging the surviving narrative sources for the Carolingian Empire together as a “body of work” is risky. Their differences are as marked as their similarities. The *Royal Frankish Annals* were a court chronicle approved by and biased without question towards the monarch and written anonymously. The *Annals of St-Bertin* began in this form and then evolved into two successive works (and they really should be understood separately) by the hands of two different bishops who both ended their careers writing for themselves and not a king. Nithard’s *Histories* stands out from the pack as the personal testimony of a lay noble who lived a different set of experiences and priorities than most clerical authors. The *Annals of Fulda* began in isolation from the East Frankish court under Rudolf and then moved closer to the court circle without becoming an “official” chronicle. Its later authors seem to have been writing from an East Frankish perspective that was beginning to grow apart from that of the West. Regino’s *Chronicle*, again providing an East Frankish view, was composed in the orbit not of a royal court but a powerful bishopric. The content of each of these was influenced by the authors’ location and political affiliation as well as his social station and personal biases. They duplicate between them many of the historical facts, but their interpretation and commentary are rarely in full agreement.

Yet all these men were writing to a certain extent out of a common “rule book” regarding warfare in general, the relationship of the Carolingian church to its practice, and the expectations and duties of the powerful church lords who contributed to the

king's forces. None of the writers exhibit anything that could be called pacifistic tendencies. There is no question in their minds but that war is a necessary part of an orderly Christian world when fought for a just cause in the Augustinian sense. Under the aegis of righteousness, war was prosecuted free of modern moral constraints on targeting noncombatants. Economic war waged against people and property was the norm and variations on the phrase that so-and-so "devastated [his enemy's territory] with fire and sword" appear frequently in the manuscripts. Sympathy for the civilian victims of such action is practically nonexistent. The authors' ire is reserved for lords who commit acts of violence without a just cause, but not necessarily for the effects thereof.

The Carolingian sources present considerable evidence that bishops and abbots took part in military matters, but almost none that they fought in person. Saint Boniface pushed to keep them out of the army altogether and Charles Martel and his sons did their best to oblige him. Charlemagne made no great effort to enforce such rules because he depended too much on the troops of land-holding prelates. Thus it became common during his reign and beyond for church lords to serve as military leaders. Carolingian writers accepted this as the norm, voicing criticism only when they performed their duties poorly. In the five texts analyzed above, there is only a single passage alleging that a cleric actually bore arms and fought, for which the author condemns him.<sup>71</sup> The most likely conclusion is that such action in the Carolingian period was a rarity.

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<sup>71</sup> Hincmar of Reims, reporting the death of Bishop Wala of Metz in 882; see fn 43.

## PART II

### CHURCHMEN AT WAR UNDER THE OTTONIANS



## 6. THE LAST CAROLINGIANS AND THE FIRST SAXONS

The following three chapters summarize the reigns of the Saxon-Ottonian kings and present an analysis of the so-called *Reichskirchensystem* in theory and reality. While the Saxon kings are not strictly speaking the subjects of the present study, the churchmen who are did not operate in a vacuum. The bishops and abbots of the German empire lived in an inextricable relationship with their rulers and their actions in war cannot be fully appreciated outside of this context. The précis of a century of rule that is presented here is necessarily abridged—perhaps in places oversimplified—but necessary as a background to the analysis of the Ottonian source documents.

As we have seen, the eighth-century Frankish realm grew to maturity, as it were, on a steady diet of warfare with the various enemies on her frontiers. Once the empire was partitioned into three kingdoms for the sons of Louis the Pious, the Frankish military elite increasingly made war upon each other. Internecine conflict among the grandsons and great-grandsons of Charlemagne continued unabated through the second half of the ninth century. The rulers of West and East Francia vied for control of the middle kingdom of Lotharingia—which would be much fought over thereafter<sup>1</sup>—and contended for the

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<sup>1</sup> Lotharingia (“Lothar’s Kingdom”) corresponded roughly to modern Lorraine, the Low Countries, and parts of the German Rhineland. While an artificial creation of the political settlement of the ninth century and not (as the other four duchies were) identified with an ancient people, it was still vital as a source of wealth and a geographic buffer with West Francia. It also contained Aachen, the site of Charlemagne’s coronation and the Carolingians’ equivalent to a capitol, giving it great symbolic value. Every effort of the ninth and tenth centuries to recreate Charlemagne’s empire began with an attempt to secure it. Helmut Beumann, “Das Kaisertum Ottos des Grossen: ein Rückblick nach Tausend Jahren,” *Wissenschaft vom Mittelalter*:

Imperial title. However, after the deposition of the emperor Charles III “the Fat” by his own vassals in 887, the territories of the once-mighty Carolingian empire were never again to be united under a single monarch; “After [Charles’s] death the kingdoms which had obeyed his authority... dissolved into separate parts and, without waiting for their natural lord, each decided to create a king from its own guts.”<sup>2</sup> Of these new kings of West Francia, Burgundy, and Italy, only one (Berengar of Friuli) was of Carolingian blood. The nobles of East Francia chose Count Arnulf of Carinthia, the illegitimate grandson of Louis the German, to succeed Charles; but if their hope was to see the empire restored, it was not realized. Even though Arnulf managed to have himself crowned emperor in 896 by Pope Formosus, in rivalry to Berengar and in the face of Roman hostility, the title proved hollow as his authority in Italy seems to have evaporated as soon as he returned to Germany.<sup>3</sup> Arnulf’s hapless minor heir, Louis III “the Child”, contended ineffectually with civil war, aristocratic feuds, and the first wave of incursions by the fierce nomadic Magyars (Hungarians). He died shortly after reaching his majority

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*Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Vienna, 1972), 411-58 (in Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany: The View From Cologne* [London: Oxford University Press, 2007], 23).

<sup>2</sup> *Post cuius mortem regna, que eius ditioni paruerant, veluti legitimo destituta herede, in partes a sua compage resolvuntur et iam non naturalem dominum prestolantur, sed unumquodque de suis visceribus regem sibi creari disponit.* Regino *Chronicon* II a.888.129.12-16; trans. Simon MacLean, in *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 199.

<sup>3</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The Early Middle Ages: Europe 400-1000*, in *The Short Oxford History of Europe*, gen. ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 273.

in 911, the last East Frankish king of the Carolingian line.<sup>4</sup> Once again, the nobles looked amongst themselves for a strong leader and elected Duke Conrad of Franconia. Conrad I inherited the Magyar problem as well as a defiant and often hostile aristocracy. Chief amongst his adversaries was Henry, the powerful Liudolfinger duke of Saxony, who rebelled outright in 915 and was more than a match for the forces the king sent against him.<sup>5</sup> Conrad had no heirs. He realized on his deathbed that the qualities and resources that made Henry such a thorn in his side also made him the best hope for East Frankish security, and so ordered the royal insignia sent to him.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Henry I (r. 919-936)*

Henry I, first of the dynasty known to history as the Ottonians (named for his first three successors), was duly elected by the leading magnates of East Francia in keeping with tradition. He was the only king of the Saxon line not to be crowned emperor and is said to have declined holy unction at his coronation as a signal to his nobles that he would not set himself above them, but rather be first among equals. This was certainly reflected in the first several years of his reign as he convinced some of the more reluctant

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<sup>4</sup> MacLean, intro. to *History and Politics* 53.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard S. Bachrach and David Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution, 912-973?: Myth and Reality" (*Early Medieval Europe* 15, No. 2 [2007]), 200.

<sup>6</sup> Widukind of Corvey *Res gestae Saxonicae*, ed. Ekkehart Rotter and Bernd Schneidmüller (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co., 2006), I.25.67-68. Also Adalbert of Magdeburg *Continuatio Treverensi*, ed. F. Kurze (MGH SSrG vol. 50 [Hannover, 1890]) a.919.156.

dukes to acknowledge him, establishing bonds of *amicitia*, formal friendship, with all who submitted to his authority.<sup>7</sup> He enhanced his legitimacy by befriending foreign rulers in the same way and by securing a royal bride—Edgitha (or Edith), sister of Aethelstan of Wessex—for his son Otto in 930.<sup>8</sup> The possession of holy relics was also important to the prestige of the kingdom and the royal house.<sup>9</sup> Henry acquired the Holy Lance (*hasta sancta*) from Rudolph II of Burgundy, though the sources differ as to whether it was by gift or purchase. This was said to have been owned by Constantine the Great and to incorporate nails from the crucifixion in its head,<sup>10</sup> and was also associated with the spear of Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced the side of Christ.<sup>11</sup> It was to become the centerpiece of the Ottonian regalia and the main religious symbol of their authority.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800-1056* (London and New York: Longman, 1991), 139-42.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 87-88.

<sup>10</sup> Paolo Squatriti, *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 157-8.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, *Widukind of Corvey: Deeds of the Saxons* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 127, fn 140.

<sup>12</sup> David Bachrach, "Military Chaplains and the Religion of War in Ottonian Germany, 919-1024" (*Religion, State and Society* 39, No. 1 [March 2011]: 15-33), 19. Also Friedrich Heer, *The Holy Roman Empire*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (New York and Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), plate 15.

While Henry I had considerable military resources at his disposal as duke of Saxony, even more so as king,<sup>13</sup> the defense of the East Frankish frontiers during his reign were generally local duties handled by the powerful marcher lords and great royal armies saw the field less frequently than they had under the Carolingians.<sup>14</sup> The dukedoms accepted Henry's authority, and though his effective personal rule seems to have been limited to Saxony and Franconia,<sup>15</sup> he was able to coordinate an effective defense of the East Frankish realm against the Magyar threat and has been credited with reacting to their incursions more effectively than many of his fellow rulers in the West.<sup>16</sup> Although the Magyars defeated Saxon armies in 919 and 924, Henry was able to negotiate a nine-year truce with them in 926 that bought time for him to reorganize and strengthen his forces. One theory holds that he reformed the rather backward Saxon military by building a large, professional body of armored cavalry, a view that has been accepted largely thanks to the influential work of Karl Leyser first published in the late 1960's<sup>17</sup> and reiterated more recently by Timothy Reuter.<sup>18</sup> Bernard and David Bachrach, by contrast, have

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<sup>13</sup> Bachrach and Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution" 201-202.

<sup>14</sup> Reuter, *Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare* 17-18.

<sup>15</sup> J. B. Gillingham, *The Kingdom of Germany in the High Middle Ages* (London: The Historical Association, 1971), 9. Widukind credits Henry's election to only the support of the Franks and Saxons (*Res gestae Saxonicae* I.26).

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Shepard, "Europe in the Wider World," in McKitterick, *The Early Middle Ages*, 237.

<sup>17</sup> Among other examples, see Karl Leyser, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbors, 900-1250* (London and Rio Grande, Ohio: The Hambledon Press, 2003), passim, esp. 43-67.

<sup>18</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 143.

sought to demonstrate not only that the development of the “knight” in Saxony probably kept pace with the rest of the Frankish domains following its conquest by Charlemagne, but that Henry’s so-called military revolution centered rather on the building of frontier fortifications and in pioneering the organization and training of *agrarii milites*, i.e., local militia, per the account of Widukind of Corvey.<sup>19</sup> This debate notwithstanding, Henry used the interval to deal with other threats, defeating the Danes and re-establishing Saxon domination over the Bohemians and Slavs. He seems to have felt confident enough in 932 to withhold tribute from the Magyars and then won a famous (but not permanent) victory over them at the battle of Riade in 933.<sup>20</sup> Whether fought by professional mounted men-at-arms or a general levy, war under Henry and his heirs generally fell into three categories: defense against invasion, campaigns to punish foreign enemies or to enforce imperial rule in subordinate territory, and the suppression of internal rebellion. (Aristocratic feuds, which might involve the king only peripherally, made up a smaller fourth category.)

*Otto I (r. 936-973)*

In addition to his foreign enemies, King Otto I “the Great” seems to have had more than his share of rebellion and civil war to deal with during the first two decades of his

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<sup>19</sup> Bachrach and Bachrach, “Saxon Military Revolution” passim. Leyser often translated the Latin term *miles* (pl. *milites*) as “knight,” but the modern sense of this word (i.e., the “feudal” mounted warrior of the High Middle Ages and later) is not always appropriate to the tenth-century context. Current scholarship tends to leave the Latin, and its ambiguity, in place when translating the sources. For the linguistic minutiae, see Bachrach and Bachrach, *ibid.* 198.

<sup>20</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 143-4.

impressive thirty-seven year reign. The root cause was discontent over the division of power, or lack thereof, amongst his family members. His reign has been seen as a transition period from the Merovingian-Carolingian way of partible inheritance to the newer principle of an indivisible kingdom, though this came about through circumstance as much as intent. For the next several reigns, only one of the king's sons survived to inherit the crown, or else there was no direct male heir at all. Yet the start of a reign was always a difficult time and there were multiple factors at work in Otto's case. His autocratic style was one. He was crowned with holy unction and full Frankish rites where his father had not been, setting himself above the other nobles of the kingdom in contrast to Henry's cooperative, first-among-equals approach. Otto was also younger than his leading magnates and had not yet won the respect his father had commanded. The tributary Slavs and Bohemians whom Henry had subdued sensed Otto's weak position and became rebellious, the raids of the Magyars were an ongoing problem, and a complicated situation of feuds within the duchies fed revolts against royal authority.<sup>21</sup>

From 937 to 941, Otto weathered a series of internal crises. Bavaria rebelled and was brought to heel in 938. Otto's half-brother Thangmar led the Saxons in rebellion in the same year but was killed in battle. Another revolt in 939 centered on Otto's brother Henry with support from the dukes of Franconia and Lotharingia. It spread to include King Louis IV of West Francia (who supported the rebels) and his rival *Dux* Hugh the Great (who took Otto's part), each hoping to make gains in Lotharingia. Otto narrowly

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 148-51 passim.

defeated his opponents. Henry then joined Saxon nobles in a conspiracy of 940-41 to assassinate the king. Otto uncovered the plot and was later reconciled with his brother.<sup>22</sup>

The king's main military operation in the 940's was his intervention in West Francia in 946 to support King Louis, with whom he had now sworn friendship.<sup>23</sup> The decade also saw him achieve a measure of security within his own kingdom by subordinating the duchies to his family. He married off his daughter Liutgard to Conrad "the Red," count of Franconia, whom he had appointed duke of Lotharingia in 944. He made his brother Henry duke of Bavaria in 947, and his son Liudolf duke of Swabia in 949; each sealed his legitimacy by marrying the daughter of his predecessor.<sup>24</sup> Otto himself made a similar move in 951 when he answered an appeal from Adelheid, widow of King Lothar of Italy, to help her against the usurper Berengar II of Ivrea. Otto came south with an army and temporarily ousted Berengar, married Adelheid, and was recognized by the assembled magnates as king of Italy through his wife. He did not stay to enforce his position but returned with much of his host to Germany, leaving his son-in-law Conrad to make terms with Berengar (who remained *de facto* king but accepted Otto as his overlord).<sup>25</sup>

In 953, Otto faced a fresh rebellion, this one led by Liudolf, who felt his status as heir apparent threatened by his father's new marriage, along with Conrad of Lotharingia, who

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 152-3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 154.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 169-70. Otto's first wife, Edgitha, had died in 946.



resented the king for overriding the settlement he had made in Italy. Both seemed to have directed their hostility not at the king but at Henry of Bavaria, whose growing influence with Otto and Adelheid troubled them. Discontented magnates in Bavaria and Saxony added their feuding agendas to the rebels' cause. Otto and Henry were hard-pressed and left with few allies.<sup>26</sup> As fortune would have it, the archbishopric of Cologne—the preeminent and most strategically located see in Lotharingia—came vacant in 953 and Otto was able to advance his younger brother Brun (or Bruno) to the office, giving him a powerful asset in the duchy. Conrad drew back from battle with Brun's troops, unwilling to challenge Otto so directly.<sup>27</sup> The sources accuse Liudolf and Conrad of allying themselves with the Magyars, and worse, of inviting them to invade via Bavaria in 954 to increase Otto's problems.<sup>28</sup> This emergency seems to have led the magnates of the Reich to set aside their differences and close ranks and the rebellion lost its momentum. Conrad submitted in June, and Liudolf, after Otto and Henry gained the upper hand in Bavaria, followed suit later in the year.<sup>29</sup> The king's son and son-in-law were stripped of their duchies and temporarily exiled but received no harsher punishment than this following their "official" reconciliation. Otto then made the controversial move

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 155; Widukind III.22.

<sup>27</sup> Adalbert a.954.168.

<sup>28</sup> Widukind III.30, Adalbert a.954.167-8.

<sup>29</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 156.

of making his brother, Archbishop Brun, duke of Lotharingia in Conrad's place, giving him unprecedented authority to match his dual title.<sup>30</sup>

With the last major internal crisis of his reign settled, Otto was able to focus his attention on the challenges from foreign enemies. The Magyars invaded Bavaria again in the summer of 955, hoping to exploit the disorder left after the civil war. Contrary to their custom, their intent this time seems to have been not to raid and run, but rather to force a decisive battle in what may have been something of a last attempt to vindicate their former power.<sup>31</sup> Otto responded by fielding an army drawn not from his home territory (the Saxons were tied down by a Slav offensive) but from other parts of his kingdom, demonstrating that he still held full authority.<sup>32</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 955, Otto's forces met the Magyars at the River Lech near Augsburg in Swabia and routed them thoroughly, inflicting heavy casualties.<sup>33</sup> Of the family members who had formerly opposed him, only Conrad the Red was able to fight alongside him. Conrad fell to a Magyar arrow after redeeming his past offenses through a day of heroism.<sup>34</sup> The battle has gone down in history as having ended the Magyar threat to the West, though this seems more a symbolic terminal point to a process that had already become a *fait*

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<sup>30</sup> Hoffmann 31; discussed below in the analysis of Ruotger of Cologne's *Vita Sancti Brunonis*.

<sup>31</sup> Leyser, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbors* 53.

<sup>32</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 161.

<sup>33</sup> Widukind III.44, Adalbert a.955.168. For the definitive treatment, see Charles R. Bowlus, *The Battle of the Lechfeld and its Aftermath, August 955* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Widukind III.47.

*accompli*.<sup>35</sup> A Saxon force was overcome by the Obodrite Slavs at about the same time, but Otto led a punitive campaign in October and defeated them at the Recknitz river.<sup>36</sup>

These victories by no means freed the Reich of enemies on her eastern frontier, but the elimination of the Magyars as an effective power paved the way for Saxon domination over the Slavs, Poles, and Danes for the rest of Otto's reign.<sup>37</sup> In Italy, meanwhile, Berengar II ruled tyrannically with little regard for his distant German overlord. (An expedition led by Liudolf in 956-7 does not seem to have resulted in anything but the prince's death.)<sup>38</sup> Pope John XII felt his secular power threatened and in 960 appealed to Otto to press his own claim by marriage to the Italian crown. Otto made sure his army was adequate to the full task of conquest this time and had his young son by Adelheid, Otto II, acknowledged and crowned as his successor before leaving.<sup>39</sup> He was himself crowned "Emperor of the Romans" by the pope on February 2, 962, in a conscious imitation of the coronation of Charles the Great. This was signified by the *Ottonianum*, an especially ornate document drawn up for the occasion confirming the papacy's rights in Italy and based on the same pact made between Charles and Pope Hadrian.<sup>40</sup> Berengar

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Widukind III.53-55.

<sup>37</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 165-6.

<sup>38</sup> Widukind III.57. The secondary sources are unrevealing about this episode.

<sup>39</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 172.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany 500-1300: A Political Interpretation* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 85.

was captured and sent into exile. John XII regretted the degree of control the emperor had gained over the papacy and repudiated their arrangements. Otto drove him from Rome, had him deposed by a synod in 963 and pushed through his own candidate as Leo VIII. St. Peter's throne changed hands twice more over the next year: the Romans staged a revolt inspired by John XII and after his death elected Benedict V, who was in turn removed by the emperor and replaced by John XIII. With "his" pope securely in place, Otto went back over the Alps in 964.<sup>41</sup> A century of German influence over papal politics was thus initiated.<sup>42</sup>

For his third Italian expedition, launched in 966, Otto had his sights set on the rest of the peninsula south of Rome. Control over the old Lombard principalities of Capua, Salerno, and Benevento was a matter of both prestige and policy for the German emperors, as this was where their territory met that of Byzantium. Otto wanted not only to strengthen his frontier against any possible Byzantine expansion (and also to guard against the threat from the Muslim emirate of Sicily), but also to gain Byzantine recognition for his own imperial status.<sup>43</sup> He brought young Otto II to be crowned co-emperor by Pope John XIII in 967. The following year he sent Bishop Liudprand of Cremona on an embassy to Constantinople to seek a political settlement and a marriage between his heir and a Byzantine princess. The eastern emperors considered themselves

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<sup>41</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 171.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold 86.

<sup>43</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 173-4 and 273 *passim*.

the true heirs to the Roman Empire and resented the upstart German kings and their pretensions to the purple.<sup>44</sup> Liudprand was rebuffed by Emperor Nicephorus I Phocas and had to return empty-handed.<sup>45</sup> After Nicephorus was deposed in 969, his successor John I Tzimiskes was more amenable. The Princess whom he sent, Theophanu—probably his niece (though her identity has always been in question)—married Otto II in 972 and went on to play an important role in Ottonian government afterwards.

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<sup>44</sup> Arnold 87.

<sup>45</sup> Liudprand of Cremona *Liudprandi relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. J. Becker (MGH SSrG 41 [Hannover and Leipzig, 1915]), passim.

## 7. OTTO II, OTTO III, AND HENRY II

### *Otto II (r. 973-983)*

Otto II succeeded his father in 973. Posterity has seen him, perhaps unfairly, as the least accomplished of his dynasty, known best for the military disasters that marked his last two years. To give him his due, there were enemies aplenty at home and abroad waiting for the arrival of a new king as they had in his father's case,<sup>1</sup> and he responded competently to these initial crises. The first challenge came from his cousin Duke Henry "the Quarrelsome" of Bavaria. Henry expected and failed to receive control of Swabia and rebelled in 974 in alliance with the dukes of Bohemia and Poland. He was defeated, deprived of his duchy and imprisoned, only to take part in a second uprising in 977, which resulted in his banishment. In 978, King Lothar of West Francia opened hostilities over the old claim to Lotharingia, among other things, and peace could not be made with him until 980. Yet the empire was now stable enough that none of these clashes carried the same danger as the family-based insurgencies that had been directed against Otto I.<sup>2</sup>

With domestic security in hand, Otto II turned to Italy to pick up where his father had left off. He launched his first expedition in 980 with the intent of incorporating all of the peninsula south of Rome into his empire, shutting out Byzantine influence altogether and neutralizing the threat from the Sicilian emirate. The emperor's ambitions came to grief

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<sup>2</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 175-7 passim.

on the coast of Calabria in July of 982, where his army was badly mauled by an Arab force and several leading noblemen were killed. Otto himself only avoided capture by the skin of his teeth, riding out into the sea to hail a passing Byzantine ship.<sup>3</sup> As their emir had been killed, the Muslims retired to Sicily and did not press their advantage.<sup>4</sup>

In May of 983, an assembly of German and North Italian magnates met in Verona, where they agreed both to send the Emperor reinforcements and to recognize his infant namesake son as his co-king and heir. In the meantime, the Danes attacked on the empire's northern border. At the end of June, a confederation of Slav tribes known as the Liutizi rose up against German hegemony in the east. The newer bishoprics that had been established in the 960's as a missionary presence were overrun, their fortresses and cities reduced to smoking ruins.<sup>5</sup> The Slavs were beaten back but the Saxons lost nearly all the territorial gains they had made over the previous fifty years.<sup>6</sup> Whether or not the news had reached him, Otto II remained in Italy, committed to renewing his enterprise, but died of malaria in December of 983. His successors were unable to build much upon his efforts and southern Italy remained contested until the end of the twelfth century.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg *Chronicon*, ed. R. Holtzmann (MGH SSrG NS 9 [Berlin, 1935]), III.20.123-21.125

<sup>4</sup> Arnold 88 and Reuter, *Germany* 177

<sup>5</sup> Thietmar III.17.119-19.122

<sup>6</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 178-9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 177-8.

*Otto III (r. 983-1002)*

The third Otto, at the tender age of four, was obviously unable to respond to the opening crisis of his reign. During Easter of 984, Henry the Quarrelsome of Bavaria took custody of the boy and claimed the throne for himself by right of being his father's first cousin and so his closest male relative. The German nobility was divided between his supporters and those who remained loyal to the child.<sup>8</sup> The Empresses Theophanu and Adelheid, respectively Otto's mother and grandmother, returned from Italy and negotiated a settlement with the help of Archbishop Willigis of Mainz, regaining guardianship of the child king in June without violence. With the consent of the nobility,<sup>9</sup> Theophanu served with distinction as regent of the empire during most of her son's minority—probably following the Byzantine precedent with which she was familiar<sup>10</sup>—and sometimes even assumed the fiction of a male persona by issuing documents signed *Theophanius gratia divina imperator augustus*.<sup>11</sup> When she died in 991, the king's grandmother Adelheid took the reins and held them until 994, when Otto was considered old enough to rule on his own.

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<sup>8</sup> Thietmar IV.1.131-2.

<sup>9</sup> Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*, trans. Phyllis G. Jestice (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 49-50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., in re: *The Charter of Theophanu* no. 2 (MGH DO III.876-77).



Warfare on the “national” scale did not dominate events during Otto III’s lifetime nearly so much as it had during the reigns of the other kings of the Saxon line. In 990, Empress Theophanu supported Duke Mieszko of Poland in a war against Bohemia.<sup>12</sup> The young king probably learned military leadership at her side.<sup>13</sup> Otto had both the Bohemians and the Poles as his allies when he launched a raid against the Elbe Slavs in 995.<sup>14</sup> Although hostility with the Slavic peoples continued, Germany seemed to have maintained a peaceful balance of power with her more “civilized” eastern neighbors during this period and their interactions consisted mostly of diplomatic and ecclesiastical maneuvering.<sup>15</sup> Otto III, educated, enthusiastic and pious, is best known to history for his ambitions of *renovatio imperii Romanorum*, a restoration of the glories of the Christian Roman Empire, which he attempted to accomplish by shifting the German Empire’s focus from military to ideological expansion.<sup>16</sup> There was a tendency in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German historiography to accuse Otto of being more “Greek” (i.e., Byzantine) than German and to question the political coherence of his program, though the historians who passed such judgements were themselves influenced by

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<sup>12</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 48.

<sup>13</sup> Thangmar, *Vita Sancti Bernwardi Episcopi Hildesheimensis*, ed. Hatto Kallfelz (in *Lebensbeschreibungen Einiger Bischöfe des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts*, FSGA 22: 265-360 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973]), 278.2.20-28.

<sup>14</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 56.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 56-7 and 90 passim.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold 89.

contemporary politics and nationalist pride.<sup>17</sup> In any event, Otto spent more time in Italy trying to realize his plans than he did ruling in Germany, to the exasperation of many of his nobles. His first Italian expedition occurred in 996, during which he made the unprecedented move of naming his chancellor and cousin Bruno of Carinthia as the first German pope,<sup>18</sup> angering the Roman nobility by defying the custom that gave the German emperor the right to consent to a candidate but not to impose one.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Otto was not even the emperor yet. He was crowned by “his” new pope Gregory V and then departed. His policy of *renovatio* had not yet surfaced, although the teenaged king did have his first encounter in Rome with the tenth-century polymath Gerbert of Aurillac, then archbishop-in-exile of Reims and the future Pope Sylvester II, who would come to have tremendous influence on him.<sup>20</sup>

Otto mounted a campaign out of Saxony against the Liutizi early in 997. Gerbert, who had accepted the emperor’s invitation to become his personal advisor and tutor, was probably there. He was certainly part of Otto’s travelling court when he went to the rescue of Gregory V later in the year. The German pope did not hold onto power long without the imperial presence to back him up. He was driven out after only a few months in office by the Roman prefect Crescentius, who set up Johannes Philagathos, Archbishop

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<sup>17</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 1-16 passim.

<sup>18</sup> Arnold 89.

<sup>19</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 59.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 65-71 passim.

of Piacenza, as the antipope John XVI in his place. The expedition that Otto III undertook at the end of 997 demonstrated the emperor's capacity for violence. The frightened citizens of Rome allowed his army into the city without resistance. Crescentius was besieged in the Castel Sant'Angelo, and when it fell, he was denied clemency and executed, his body hung on public display. Philagathos was dragged from his hiding place, blinded, and mutilated, an action that Otto himself almost certainly approved. He was then deposed by formal synod and paraded in humiliating fashion on donkey-back around Rome. He was only saved from death by the intervention of the hermit Saint Nilus.<sup>21</sup> To many modern historians, and even some contemporaries, this was an act of unusual brutality and vengeance on Otto's part. However, Crescentius had already been involved in one attempt to usurp power in Rome and had been pardoned by Otto and Gregory V after the imperial coronation in 996. Thus, this second offense was unforgivable by contemporary mores and meant that both the prefect and his antipope deserved only the punishment meted out to heretics and apostates.<sup>22</sup>

The emperor advanced Gerbert to the papacy in 999. His choice of the name Sylvester II was no doubt meant to evoke the first pope of that name, who had partnered

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 73-75.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 79-80. Johannes Philagathos, a.k.a. John of Calabria, had also been the "special confidante" of Empress Theophanu during her regency (ibid. 50), and had served briefly as Otto's childhood tutor before the empress made him archbishop of Piacenza (Francis J. Tschan, *Saint Bernward of Hildesheim* [University of Notre Dame: Publications in Medieval Studies 6: 12-13, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1942], 49). It is not impossible that the young emperor felt some sense of personal betrayal that enflamed his anger, but we may never know.

with Constantine the Great.<sup>23</sup> Together they granted ecclesiastical independence to Poland, which may or may not have been the first deliberate move of their program of *renovatio*.<sup>24</sup> Otto made a pilgrimage to Gniezno at the end of the year to the grave of one of his idols, the martyred missionary-bishop Saint Adalbert of Prague, and also oversaw the creation of a new Polish archdiocese answerable to Duke Boleslav Chrobry. The emperor presided at a ceremony raising Boleslav from the status of tributary to ally, but the sources conflict as to how much autonomy he had been granted.<sup>25</sup> Boleslav would clash repeatedly with Henry II over this and other matters, so it seems as though Otto's efforts in this case towards a peaceful expansion of the neo-Roman sphere led indirectly to future war. Otto III also oversaw the elevation of Hungary in 1001 to a Christian kingdom with its first archbishopric,<sup>26</sup> but its subordinate relationship with the German empire seems to have remained amicable until about 1030.

The emperor left on his third and final Italian expedition in June of 1000, conducting several items of governmental business on the way. Once he had settled into Rome again, Otto III received a visit in the person of Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim, who had come to plead for justice in his dispute with Archbishop Willigis of Mainz over the convent at Gandersheim (described at length in chapter 13). The emperor and Pope

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<sup>23</sup> Arnold 90.

<sup>24</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 90-91.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 99-103.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold 90-91 and Althoff, *Otto III* 127.

Sylvester II convened a synod to hear Bernward's case, which was decided in his favor, but Willigis defied the papal ruling and held synods of his own. Bernward's biographer Francis Tschan believes this disregard for Otto's authority shows how disconnected Otto III had become from events in Germany.<sup>27</sup> Gerd Althoff, on the other hand, argues that Otto's hands were tied by a complex legal situation about which he could do little.<sup>28</sup>

Before he returned home, Bishop Bernward was present for the emperor's last two military actions, which were recorded in his *Vita*. The city of Tivoli rebelled against Otto in early 1001 and the emperor laid siege to it. With Bernward and Pope Sylvester as negotiators, the citizens performed a ritual public submission and avoided further bloodshed.<sup>29</sup> Shortly after this, there was some form of uprising against the emperor by the Romans. This may have been a violent response to Otto's apparent intention to subjugate papal independence to imperial rule.<sup>30</sup> The sources, however, disagree as to the seriousness of the violence. It may have been a genuine revolt or simply a scuffle that got out of control, typical of what happened whenever the "German army" was imposed on the city.<sup>31</sup> Otto and his entourage were trapped inside the imperial palace. They gathered their resolve, armed themselves, and sallied out in force the next morning led by Bishop

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<sup>27</sup> Tschan, *Saint Bernward of Hildesheim* 188.

<sup>28</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 118.

<sup>29</sup> Thangmar 23.316-18.

<sup>30</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 120-22 *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 122-24.

Bernward bearing the Holy Lance. The would-be rebels were cowed and sued for peace, apparently without further violence.<sup>32</sup> Otto made an impassioned speech from the castle balcony berating his subjects for turning on him and then departed Rome for Ravenna. He sent to Germany for new military levies, but also spent the balance of 1001 conducting the usual political and ecclesiastical business for both Italy and the empire's eastern domains. If the emperor intended revenge on the Romans, he does not seem to have been in a hurry.<sup>33</sup> The troop contingents of his church magnates began arriving late in the year, but Otto was sick from a fever by this time and was unable to undertake any action. He died in January 1002.

*Henry II (r. 1002-1024)*

Otto III died unmarried and childless and had made no provisions for the succession. His cousin Duke Henry of Bavaria, son of the late Henry the Quarrelsome, was one of three claimants to the throne. Otto's men escorted his body across the Alps from Italy and towards Aachen, city of Charlemagne, where the late emperor had wished to be buried. Duke Henry met the funeral procession in Bavaria and took charge of the corpse and the royal insignia (the crown and Holy Lance), then outmaneuvered his rivals over

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<sup>32</sup> Thangmar 24.318.

<sup>33</sup> Althoff, *Otto III* 127.

the next several months and secured the support of enough of the kingdom's leading noblemen to be elected king peacefully in June.

Henry II was as pious in his way as his predecessor had been, but piety to him did not consist of being "otherworldly and unrealistic."<sup>34</sup> On the surface, his accession saw the end of Otto III's rhetoric of *renovatio* and a return to traditional Saxon kingship, though this would change later. Henry's seal from 1003 onward was not inscribed *renovatio imperii Romanorum*, but *renovatio regni Francorum*, reflecting an indebtedness to the Carolingian past. He could not, in any case, properly claim to be head of a "Roman" empire right at the start of his reign.<sup>35</sup> He did not receive the imperial crown from the pope until 1014, only after political conditions in Rome were right and he had assured Germany's security through a long period of local wars

Henry's nemesis was Duke Boleslav Chrobry of Poland. There was ill will between them over Boleslav's claim by marriage to the march of Meißen and over an attack made on the duke in Merseburg for which he blamed the king. The tipping point was Boleslav's annexation of Bohemia in 1003 for which he refused to pay tribute.<sup>36</sup> Henry launched campaigns against him every second or third year for fifteen years, strengthening his forces through a firm alliance with the pagan Liutzi, to the scandal of

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<sup>34</sup> Heer 49.

<sup>35</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 281-2.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 260.

some observers.<sup>37</sup> This was not, however, a war of conquest, but of perennial feud with another Christian ruler which both parties were willing to see reconciled, as seen in the terms of the temporary peace achieved in 1013.<sup>38</sup> Saxon expansion was a thing of the past; Boleslav outlived his rival long enough to be crowned king in his own right.

The long series of clashes with the Poles was interspersed with rebellion in other quarters. The Capetian kings of West Francia were not so concerned with re-acquiring Lotharingia as their Carolingian predecessors had been, but various noble factions within the duchy chafed against German rule regardless. Henry II went to war with Count Baldwin IV of Flanders in 1006-7 and 1023 and with the Lotharingian brothers of his wife Kunegunde from 1008 to 1015. The rebellions spilled into a campaign against Burgundy in 1016, though Henry eventually made an agreement with the childless King Rudolf III to name him as his heir.<sup>39</sup> The Bavarian aristocracy fought with Henry shortly after he was crowned, and the Billung clan, near-independent rulers in Saxony who had been less than supportive of the last round of Polish wars, made trouble for the king on several occasions late in his reign. Duke Bernard rebelled outright in 1020. Unlike the

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<sup>37</sup> Thietmar VI.22.301-25.304

<sup>38</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 260.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 201-2. Rudolf III outlived Henry II, and his throne was claimed instead by the first Salian, Conrad II, "emperor of three kingdoms."



situations faced by Otto I in 939-41 and 953-4, these risings were not focused on a rival member of the king's family.<sup>40</sup>

As for Italy, Henry II spent the least amount of time there of all the Ottonians (save for Henry I, who had never taken the imperial crown). The north Italian magnates had chosen Margrave Arduin of Ivrea as their king when Otto III died. After settling a rebellion in southern Germany, Henry made his first appearance in Lombardy in 1004; he was duly elected and crowned in turn, but Arduin remained defiant. Henry was unable to enforce his rule effectively for another ten years.<sup>41</sup> In 1012, power in Rome shifted away from the Crescentii, a family hostile to the emperors, and a son of the rival count of Tusculum was elected pope as Benedict VIII. Henry was able to enter Rome at last in 1014 for his imperial coronation.<sup>42</sup> He and Benedict began a collaborative relationship like that enjoyed by Otto III and Sylvester II but with more tangible results. They presided jointly over a synod in Pavia in 1014 calling for church reform and another during the papal visit to Germany in 1020.<sup>43</sup> At that time, Benedict called on Henry, as *defensor aecclesiae*,<sup>44</sup> to launch an operation in southern Italy against the Byzantines,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid 200.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 269.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold 93 and David A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 307, fn 3.

<sup>43</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 282 and Arnold 93. Henry II's devotion to reform of the Church would see him canonized in 1146.

<sup>44</sup> Thietmar VII.1.396.32

who had suborned the treachery of the princes of Capua and Salerno. Henry undertook his final Italian expedition in 1021-22 and the pope himself accompanied him on the march.<sup>45</sup> Henry and Benedict VIII convened another reforming synod in Pavia after the campaign's successful conclusion.<sup>46</sup>

Henry II and Kunegunde had no children and so in 1024 a second emperor died lacking a designated heir. With relatively little drama, the leading noblemen of Germany elected Conrad of Franconia, great-great-grandson of Otto I through his daughter Liudgard and Conrad "the Red," to succeed him as Conrad II. The Salian dynasty that followed began as a period of relative peace, but the church reform that had taken root under Henry II would ultimately lead to the Investiture Controversy of 1075-1122 and bring acrimony and war between empire and papacy. The timeline of the present study, however, must be brought to a close by Henry's passing.

### *The Ottonian Primary Sources*

Just as it was under Charlemagne and his heirs, the long tenure of the Ottonian kings seems to have been a relentless series of wars, or at least this is the impression given by the chroniclers. The East Frankish bishops and abbots of the tenth and early eleventh

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<sup>45</sup> John W. Bernhardt, "King Henry II of Germany: Royal Self-Representation and Historical Memory," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 67-68.

<sup>46</sup> Arnold 93.

centuries appeared frequently in the accounts of battles, even more so than their Carolingian predecessors, and the accounts themselves are numerous. East Frankish historiography had come to an abrupt halt when Regino of Prüm laid down his pen in 906, but it re-emerged in the 960's in the hands of Adalbert of Magdeburg and Widukind of Corvey. Liudprand of Cremona wrote at the same time of events in the empire as seen from Italy. His West Frankish counterpart was Flodoard of Reims, who started writing somewhat earlier than the other three. Together with Ruotger's *vita* of Archbishop Brun of Cologne and Gerhard's of Udalrich of Augsburg, this list comprises the major narrative sources for the reigns of Henry I and Otto I. The period from Otto II through Henry II is well-covered by the *Chronicon* of Thietmar of Merseburg and by the *vitae* of the bishops Burchard of Worms and Bernward of Hildesheim.

## 8. THE KING AND THE IMPERIAL CHURCH

The Ottonian monarchy can be summarized in three words: itinerant, personal, and sacral. Although their roots and political clout lay in Saxony, the Liudolfing kings had no official capital or primary royal residence there. They went on constant progress through their domain for both political and economic reasons, traveling with their entourage from one royal property to another and depending as well on their vassals (nearly always the ecclesiastical ones) to host them. The kings followed a regular and predictable itinerary to conduct business, observe the principal Christian feast days at important religious sites, conduct public crown-wearings to broadcast the royal image, and bind their kingdom together through their personal relationships with their magnates. Ottonian government was thus a face-to-face affair that consisted of “institutions that could be transported about the realm on the back of a horse.”<sup>1</sup> In addition to securing the other duchies of Germany by placing relatives in the titular positions, Otto I did much work to shore up his family’s power by granting lands and privileges both to the local aristocracy and to bishoprics and abbeys.<sup>2</sup> These latter establishments in particular then owed the king *servicia*, hospitality and military support, commensurate with the benefits they received.

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<sup>1</sup> David A. Warner, “Saints and Politics in Ottonian Germany,” in N. van Deusen (ed.), *Medieval Germany: Associations and Delineations*, Claremont Cultural Studies, 5 (Ottawa: 2000), 7-28.

<sup>2</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 2. Also Heinrich Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*, trans. Patrick J. Geary (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 157-164 *passim*.

The Liudolfings began as but one noble clan amongst others, from whom they had to set themselves apart in order to rule effectively. They did this in part by increasing the fear of royal punishment.<sup>3</sup> In a real sense, they put the fear of God into their peers. The king was the *vicarius Christi*, the vicar of Christ, akin to the priesthood and anointed with holy chrism in the manner of the Old Testament kings. He was considered God's chosen ruler on Earth, governing the temporal sphere in partnership with the Pope and the bishops who oversaw the spiritual one. This sacrality was partly a continuation of the pre-Christian Germanic tradition of the king or warlord as the bearer of *heil* (luck), the source of royal charisma that bound followers to him.<sup>4</sup> At his coronation, the king was girded with his sword and exhorted to defend the realm against "all enemies of Christ, barbarians and bad Christians, as divine authority has given you power over the whole empire of the Franks for the establishment of peace among all Christians."<sup>5</sup> His sacral mystique bolstered his authority with the aristocracy and aided him in arbitrating their disputes. The public rituals of the royal iter, with its crown-wearing processions and attendance at church festivals, represented the consensus of the ruled, which is to say the nobility and the higher clergy. The high point of the Ottonian kings' sacrality came when

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<sup>3</sup> Fichtenau 159.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 161-2. Also Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 80-81.

<sup>5</sup> This proclamation is attributed to Bishop Hildibert of Mainz at the coronation of Otto I in Aachen in 936: *Accipe hunc gladium, quo eicias omnes Christi adversarios, barbaros et malos Christianos, auctoritate divina tibi tradita omni potestate totius imperii Francorum, ad firmissimam pacem omnium Christianorum*. Widukind II.1.106.19-23.

they were crowned as emperors (as Otto I was in 962) by the popes in Rome.<sup>6</sup>

While this aspect of royal authority may seem abstract, the control that the king exercised over his “lords spiritual” was firmly grounded in worldly priorities. He depended on his bishops and abbots not only to host the royal progress and provide troops for his armies, but also to serve as administrators, advisors, and ambassadors. Thus the selection of candidates for these offices continued to be as important as it had been under the Carolingians. The process by which German bishops and abbots were created is best understood through the work of the late Timothy Reuter, who questioned and then revised the traditional scholarly view of the subject. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, it was believed that the Ottonian and Salian rulers followed a deliberate policy of appointing their own picked men to bishoprics and abbacies under the so-called *Reichskirchensystem* in order to counter the unreliable and often hostile lay aristocracy and turn the church into their primary instrument of government.<sup>7</sup> The practice is supposed to have peaked during the last two decades of the reign of Otto I after his unsuccessful bid to control the dukedoms through his own relations, as well as in the first quarter of the eleventh century under Henry II.<sup>8</sup> Otto was thought to have drawn his candidates first from a pool of former pupils of his brother Brun, Archbishop of Cologne, and then following Brun’s death from the members of the royal chapel that

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<sup>6</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 4.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Reuter, “The ‘Imperial Church System’ of the Ottonian and Salian Rulers: A Reconsideration” (*The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 [1982]), 347.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 348-9.

formed part of Otto's court entourage.<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Reuter's re-examination, the *Reichskirchensystem* is now widely seen as a construct of nineteenth-century historians in search of Germany's ancient constitutional underpinnings during the "Second Reich." The mass of documentary evidence exactly organized and published in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* certainly suggests a consistent approach to rule, if not necessarily a formalized system; but to heed the advice of Henry Mayr-Harting, one should be careful not to mistake the structure of documentation for the structure of actual history.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than a cut-and-dried mechanism of royal appointments, the creation of bishops and abbots seems to have been a complicated balancing act between the king's will, the wishes of the local nobility, and the consent of the cathedral chapter or monastery in question. Canon law on the matter remained as it had been since late antiquity, requiring the candidate to be elected by the members of the institution which they were to govern. The older bishoprics, founded before Ottonian rule, were particularly accustomed to exercising their right of free election and often resisted the tendency of kings (Henry II especially) to treat this merely as the right to propose a candidate.<sup>11</sup> The royal chapel did come to function as a sort of finishing school for some of these men—as "clerical

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<sup>9</sup> Josef Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1966), ii. 55-59.

<sup>10</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 6.

<sup>11</sup> Reuter, "Imperial Church System" 350-1.

vassals” of the king,<sup>12</sup> the *capellani* would seem to have been ideally positioned to benefit from royal attention—but not all were equally close to the king. Bishoprics could just as easily go to qualified men who had not served as chaplains. Over a third of the available positions went to outsiders under Otto III and Henry II and the proportion rose to more than half by the reign of Henry III (r. 1017-1028).<sup>13</sup> The majority of candidates continued to be high-ranking aristocrats and a given see was often held continuously within a kinship group, as was the case with five successive bishops of Worms from 999 to 1065<sup>14</sup> (including Burchard, discussed later.) This tradition and the relatively small number of interrelated families that made up the Ottonian and Salian ruling elite resulted in a large number of bishops who were *cognationes* of the king, tied to him by blood or marriage.<sup>15</sup> Neither these “royal bishops” nor the chapel alumni should be treated as a special group drawn from more-favored candidates, although a chapter might wish to elect such a man due to his influence at court; even Archbishop Brun was duly voted into his position by the canons of Cologne before being confirmed by his brother the king.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Fleckenstein 177; cited in Reuter, “Imperial Church System” 352.

<sup>13</sup> Reuter, “Imperial Church System” 352-3.

<sup>14</sup> W. Metz, “Zur Herkunft und Verwandschaft Bischof Burchards I. von Worms” (*Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, xxvi [1976]), 31-42. Cited in Reuter, “Imperial Church System” 353.

<sup>15</sup> Leyser, *Rule and Conflict* part I, “Otto I and his Saxon Enemies,” passim.

<sup>16</sup> Reuter, “Imperial Church System” 354.



Lacking such a connection of his own, an aspiring candidate might also approach a member of the royal family to act as their advocate, as secular aristocrats often did.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of their origins, the bishops should not be thought of as a “civil service” in the modern sense. While the king wielded a high degree of influence over their appointment, he was unable to depose them, at least in Germany; the imperial bishops in Italy seem to have been subject to different rules. As he did with the lay nobility, the king controlled his bishops by the bestowal or withdrawal of the royal *gratia*, or favor.<sup>18</sup> Those who provided loyal service might benefit through gifts of land or governmental privileges such as immunity from certain fees or the right to hold a market or mint coins. Beginning under Otto II, grants of the latter predominated over the former, in part because these simply cost the king less and could be taken back.<sup>19</sup> Bishops were more dependent on the king’s support than the lay nobles. One who was *persona non grata* might have the royal protection withdrawn but could be received back into favor after a generous monetary payment. Even bishops involved in rebellion might only be sent temporarily into exile for their offense.<sup>20</sup> Such was the case with Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, who abandoned Otto I during his siege of Breisach in 939, attempted to join the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 355.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 359.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 356.

forces of Otto's rebel brother Henry, and was banished to the monastery of Fulda.<sup>21</sup> He eventually returned and held his office for another sixteen years until his death. Adalbert of Magdeburg wrote dryly that he was "vigorous in holy religion and very praiseworthy, if only he had not seemed to reprehensible in this alone: that wherever even a single enemy of the king sprang up he immediately placed himself at his side."<sup>22</sup> The simple fact that bishops might align against the king casts doubt on the idea that they were all somehow picked royal appointees whose first loyalty was to the crown.

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<sup>21</sup> Adalbert a.939.160; also Widukind II.24-25. Widukind places Frederick's exile in Hamburg.

<sup>22</sup> *...vir in sancta religione strennus et valde laudabilis, nisi in hoc tantum videbatur reprehensibilis, quod, sicubi vel unus regis inimicus emersit, ipse se statim secundum apposuit.* Adalbert a.954.168.11-14 (trans. MacLean, 256-7).

## 9. THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE: FLODOARD AND LIUDPRAND

### Flodoard of Reims, *Annales*

Born not far from Reims and educated at its cathedral school before entering the priesthood and becoming a canon there, Flodoard began in 919 to write his yearly chronicle in the tradition of Archbishop Hincmar (d. 882), continuator of the *Annales Bertiniani*.<sup>1</sup> Flodoard's viewpoint as a lifelong man of Reims is instructive, as he was both an outsider to the events taking place in East Francia and holder of a ringside seat for much of the action in the West. He was at all times biased somewhat towards his home diocese, which gave him a degree of impartiality when he observed events in the East and allowed him to be critical of both sides during the struggles for the West Frankish crown. Even if he can be set apart as a "French" chronicler from the "German" histories, Flodoard's work increases our understanding of clerical involvement in war and political conflict in all the post-Carolingian Frankish domains. Among the writers of the Ottonian period in this study, not only was he the earliest to begin, he was the only one to have recorded contemporary events year by year rather than compiling history after the fact.

Much of Flodoard's writing focuses on the trials and tribulations of Archbishop Artoldus of Reims (d. 961), whose possession of the title came and went according to the

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Fanning and Bernard S. Bachrach, introduction to *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*, Readings in Medieval Civilizations and Cultures IX, series editor Paul Edward Dutton (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004), viii-ix. For the *AB*, see Chapter 5.

support or enmity of the West Frankish kings (Raoul and then Louis IV) and their powerful rival Hugh the Great of Paris. The *Annales* is hardly a *vita* of Artoldus and Flodoard was only a casual partisan. He shrugged and accepted his superior's repeated deposition and re-investment with equal aplomb.<sup>2</sup> Rather, Artoldus serves as an anchor point for Flodoard's rich description of West Frankish bishops' critical participation in military affairs, whether against external enemies, internally on the part of the king against his rivals (or vice versa), or in pursuit of feuds to support their aristocratic and ecclesiastical rights. The lines between these categories often blur.

Feud comes into play early in Flodoard's account as he describes how his own Archbishop Heriveus conducted a four-week siege of the *castellum* of Mézières that had been seized from him by one Count Erlebaldu, a local enemy whom the archbishop had excommunicated.<sup>3</sup> The count of Cambrai destroyed a *castellum* belonging to Bishop Stephen of his county for which he later made monetary reparations.<sup>4</sup> Later we read of a similar clash between the count and bishop of Tongres.<sup>5</sup> Feud between the count and bishop of the same area over disputed property seems to have been a frequent occurrence.

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<sup>2</sup> Fanning and Bachrach ix-x.

<sup>3</sup> Flodoard of Reims *Annales*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1905), a.920.2-3 (trans. Fanning and Bachrach, 4, 2B). Flodoard's yearly entries tend to run on without breaks, thus the translators' lettered paragraph subdivisions are included for clarity. For an explanation of Flodoard's chapter numbering system, see Fanning and Bachrach xxviii-xxix.

<sup>4</sup> Flodoard a.924.24 (12, 6G-H).

<sup>5</sup> Flodoard a.933.55 (23, 15A).

Boso, King Raoul's brother, destroyed a fortress (*castrum*) of the hostile Bishop Bovo of Châlons, "whose men had lopped off the limbs of some of Boso's men."<sup>6</sup> At this point it becomes difficult to distinguish private feud from power struggles between men of the king's party and that of his rivals. "The clergy and people" (*clerum et populum*) of Reims elected a new archbishop against King Raoul's wishes, possibly under the influence of the rebel Heribert, count of Vermandois.<sup>7</sup> The king besieged and captured Reims and elevated Artoldus to the see instead and later captured the aforementioned Bovo of Châlons.<sup>8</sup> After Bovo regained the king's favor and thus his bishopric, one Milo, whom the king had previously selected to replace him, pillaged the same area and was excommunicated by Artoldus and the other bishops of the province.<sup>9</sup> This is one of several instances of how excommunication could be a useful weapon in a bishop's arsenal, one to which lay magnates did not have access.

Shifting alliances in 937 caused Hugh the Great, uncle to the young king Louis IV "d'Outremer," to force Archbishop Artoldus—whom he had previously supported—to abdicate in favor of the former archbishop, Hugh of Vermandois, son of his enemy-turned-ally Count Heribert.<sup>10</sup> The subsequent struggles over Reims took on the character

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<sup>6</sup> ...*cujus homines quosdam Bosnonis membris trunucaverant*. Flodoard a.931.49.3-4 (20, 13E).

<sup>7</sup> Flodoard a.931.49.15 (21, 13F).

<sup>8</sup> Flodoard a.931.51 (21, 13H).

<sup>9</sup> *Milo... excommunicatur ab Artoldo archiepiscopo ceterisque Remensis dioceseos episcopis*. Flodoard a.932.53.10-12 (22, 14C).

<sup>10</sup> Flodoard a.940.76-77 (33, 22C). See also Fanning and Bachrach xvii-xviii.

of a feud between Artoldus and Hugh, backed respectively by King Louis and Hugh the Great. This is a perfect indicator of the importance of the West Frankish bishops to the realm and how entwined their careers and positions could be with royal politics. Even though Artoldus now had no retinue to command, he appeared by the king's side on campaign on multiple occasions<sup>11</sup> as his royal patron attempted—with limited success—to restore him to the archbishopric. The feud-like aspects spilled over into violent clashes even when the greater players were absent, as seen when Archbishop Hugh sacked a fortress held by Artoldus' brothers.<sup>12</sup> Finally, with Otto I as his ally, Louis invested Reims with a large army. Hugh's friends counseled the archbishop to surrender because "if the *urbs* should be taken by storm, they would not be able to intercede with the kings to prevent his eyes from being torn out."<sup>13</sup> As seen in the many examples thus far, blinding was a customary punishment for ecclesiastical enemies who could not legally be deprived of office. While possession seems to have counted for much, it ultimately took a synod of bishops convened by Louis and Otto jointly to declare Hugh of Vermandois' candidacy void and the interference by the pope on his part as uncanonical.<sup>14</sup> The fighting between the rival parties nonetheless continued for some time afterwards.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Flodoard a.940.78-79 (34, 22F); a.941.81-82 (35, 23F); a.943.87 (37, 25A).

<sup>12</sup> Flodoard a.943.89 (38, 25D).

<sup>13</sup> ...*neque intervenire possent apud reges pro ipso quin eruentur ei oculi, si urbem vi capi contigisset*. Flodoard a.946.102.17-18 (44, 28G).

<sup>14</sup> Flodoard a.948.107-121 passim (46-52, 30).

<sup>15</sup> Flodoard a.949.122-24 (52-53, 31D); a.952.133-34 (57, 34C).

Besides the struggles of Artoldus to regain his see with the king's support, bishops and (to a lesser extent) abbots appear prominently in Flodoard's records of royal campaigns against enemies of the realm. In 923, King Raoul moved against the settled Norse in Brittany, "along with Archbishop Seulfus [of Reims]... and certain other select brave men."<sup>16</sup> Seulfus then served as one of the king's spokesmen for peace negotiations.<sup>17</sup> The Norse attacked Burgundy in 925 and were met by forces under the command of two bishops, Ansegisus of Troyes and Gozcelinus of Langres, the former of whom was wounded in action. King Raoul reinforced them with troops from the church of Reims along with Bishop Abbo of Soissons.<sup>18</sup> In 944, King Louis retaliated against a Norse incursion in Brittany with "certain bishops of Francia and Burgundy."<sup>19</sup> As evidence for churchmen participating in combat, these instances are ambiguous at best. Only the wound suffered by Ansegisus suggests a proximity to the action and it could as easily have been sustained without actually bearing arms.

It is clear from Flodoard's accounts that being a bishop could be a dangerous occupation, whether combined with soldiering or not. Benno of Metz, appointed by Henry I against the will of his constituency, "was the victim of a plot and was castrated

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<sup>16</sup> ...illo transiit cum Seulfo archiepiscopo... aliisque quibusdam et electis viris fortibus. Flodoard a.923.16.11-13 (9, 5I).

<sup>17</sup> Flodoard a.924.24 (12,6F).

<sup>18</sup> Flodoard a.925.26-27 (13, 7A).

<sup>19</sup> ...et quibusdam episcopis Franciae ac Burgundiae. Flodoard a.944.95. 2-3 (40, 26I).

and blinded.”<sup>20</sup> Bishop Robert of Tours was “killed in his camp by brigands” while returning from Rome.<sup>21</sup> The bishop of Dol was “crushed and killed in the church by the great crowd of refugees” during the Norse assault on Brittany.<sup>22</sup> The bishops of Pavia and Vercelli fell victim to the Magyar sack of the former city in 924.<sup>23</sup> Church magnates were also intimately involved in the politics of conflict even after the fighting was done. There are several instances of bishops serving as negotiators of treaties with both foreign enemies and rebels,<sup>24</sup> provided hostages to ensure their own compliance,<sup>25</sup> or even served as hostages themselves.<sup>26</sup> Lest it seem that bishops were more likely to perish by violence than not, Flodoard includes regular notes whenever one passes away of unmentioned, though probably natural, causes. In two such cases these men succumbed to hard work and sanctity. Bishop Otgarius of Amiens, a “holy man,” died at an age over

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<sup>20</sup> *Benno Mettensis episcopus, insidiis appetitus, eviratus, luminibusque privatus est.* Flodoard a.928.43.10-12 (18,10D). Also in Adalbert a.927.158.

<sup>21</sup> *Rotbertus, episcopus Turonensis aecclesiae, Roma remeans, sub Alpibus noctu infra tentoria cum comitantibus secum interimitur a latronibus.* Flodoard a.931.48.4-6 (20,13D).

<sup>22</sup> *Civitas eorum, Dolus nomine, capta et episcopus ejusdem confugientium in aecclesiam multitudinum stipatione oppressus et enecatus est.* Flodoard a.944.94.8-11 (40, 26H).

<sup>23</sup> Flodoard a.924.22 (11, 6D).

<sup>24</sup> Flodoard a.924.24 (12, 6F); a.938.69 (30, 20A); a.942.83-84 (36, 24A); a.949.125 (53, 31E); a.950.127 (54, 32A).

<sup>25</sup> Flodoard a.936.64 (28, 18B); a.939.72(31, 21C); a.945.97 (41, 27C).

<sup>26</sup> Flodoard a.945.99 (42, 27F).



100<sup>27</sup> and Archbishop Teotolo of Tours seems to have died due to the stress of acting as a peacemaker, with his passing being marked by miracles.<sup>28</sup>

Flodoard's own moral perspective is consistent, if subtle, in the text. The hand of God scarcely appears as a direct influence on the course of history. The Byzantines routed the Saracens at Freinet (Fraxinetum) in 931 "with God's help" (*Deo propitio*),<sup>29</sup> but that seems to be the only instance. Even the miracles that blunt the depredations of the Magyars in 937 are described in the passive voice with no credit given to divine agency.<sup>30</sup> The language Flodoard uses to describe the collateral damage of war suggests an unusual sympathy for its civilian victims. "The country folk" (*rusticani*) suffered losses at the hands of the forces of Count Robert of Paris in 923.<sup>31</sup> Henry I, invading Lotharingia in the same year, "laid waste the area between the Rhine and the Moselle, carried off herds and plow animals, drained away other resources and captured many people, including youths."<sup>32</sup> Of the Magyar sack of Pavia in 924, Flodoard says that "[from] the almost innumerable multitude of inhabitants [of the city], only 200 are said to have survived."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Flodoard a.928.41 (17, 10B).

<sup>28</sup> Flodoard a.945.97-98 (42, 27D).

<sup>29</sup> Flodoard a.931.47.7 (20, 13B).

<sup>30</sup> Flodoard a.937.65-66 (29, 19C).

<sup>31</sup> Flodoard a.923.13 (8, 5E).

<sup>32</sup> *Depopulatus est autem quod inter Rhenum et Mosellam interjacet, gregum armentorumque abductione ac ceterarum opum exhaustu, eum plurimorum quoque juventutis captivitate.* Flodoard a.923.18.7-10 (10, 5L).

<sup>33</sup> *...atque ex illa pene innumerabili multitudine cc tantum superfuisse memorantur...* Flodoard

Displaying the usual indignation of the clerical writer for damage done to church property, he also accuses the enemy of burning no fewer than 44 churches in the same incursion. The king's troops ravaged the diocese of Reims in 944, "[thus] they ran wild with either pillaging or plundering."<sup>34</sup> The "thieves" (*grassatoribus*) of Hugh the Great violated the lands of Reims' dependents.<sup>35</sup> Even King Louis, nominally one of the "good guys" in Flodoard's narrative, is criticized for doing the same in his attempt of 945 to dislodge Archbishop Hugh.<sup>36</sup> Flodoard also singles King Charles out for criticism when he makes war during Lent<sup>37</sup> and on Pentecost Sunday<sup>38</sup> and names other Christian lords who attack a castle of King Louis during Easter season,<sup>39</sup> seemingly foreshadowing the impetus for the Truce of God movement of the following century.

Nothing in the Annals suggests that Flodoard in any way disapproved of church lords participating in war as a prerogative of their rank and the *quid pro quo* of their fealty to the king. Indeed, he provides ample description of bishops prosecuting war vigorously both on the king's behalf and in order to enforce their own rights and those of their see.

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a.924.22.10-12 (11, 6D).

<sup>34</sup> *Regii milites episcopatum Remensem depraedantur... sicque alterutris debacchantur rapinis atque depraedationibus.* Flodoard a.944.93.16-19 (40, 26F).

<sup>35</sup> Flodoard a.948.117.17-18 (50, 30N).

<sup>36</sup> Flodoard a.945.96 (41, 27B).

<sup>37</sup> Flodoard a.922.7 (5, 4A).

<sup>38</sup> Flodoard a.922.9 (6, 4D).

<sup>39</sup> Flodoard a.945.96 (41, 27A).

Other than Ansegisus of Troyes (above), who may or may not have been wounded by being too close to the fighting, none of these instances indicate whether or not the bishops of West Francia took up arms in person. However, a subtle and seemingly contradictory hint of disapproval colors his description of Brun of Cologne, whose geographical and dynastic position let him participate in the politics of both the West and East kingdoms.<sup>40</sup> Brun is “the bishop who had become a duke” (*ex praesule ducem*)<sup>41</sup> to whom King Otto “[commits]... the Lotharingian kingdom” (*regnum Lothariense committit*).<sup>42</sup> As Mayr-Harting points out, “The fact that Flodoard usually withheld the title ‘archbishop’ from Brun suggests that he was another of those critics who disliked Brun’s military side because he thought that it compromised his religious role.”<sup>43</sup> Hartmut Hoffmann interprets him as being even more critical, contending that Flodoard thought Brun “left his episcopal ministry in the lurch the moment he made himself commander.”<sup>44</sup> Given that Flodoard seems to have accepted such conduct from most bishops, it may be that he took exception to Brun being elevated to the ducal title, thus wielding unprecedented

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<sup>40</sup> Brun and Otto’s sister Gerberga was married to King Louis IV, and their sister Hadwig was married to Hugh the Great, which connections allowed Brun to frequently serve as arbiter between the rival parties; Fanning and Bachrach xxiv.

<sup>41</sup> Flodoard a.957.144.5 (62, 39B).

<sup>42</sup> Flodoard a.953.137.8-9 (58, 35F).

<sup>43</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 26.

<sup>44</sup> Hartmut Hoffman, “Politik und Kultur in Ottonischen Reichskirchensystem,” *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 22 (1957), 35.

power, without necessarily disapproving of his activities as a military leader *per se*.

*Liudprandi Opera* (The works of Liudprand of Cremona)

Liudprand, born into an influential Lombard family around 920 and taken in 931 as a child into the household of King Hugh of Italy,<sup>45</sup> provides a non-German perspective on Frankish affairs and practices in much the same way as Flodoard. This similarity is, however, only skin-deep. Flodoard enjoyed something like the Benedictine *stabilitas loci* at Reims in spite of the political turmoil that affected his city and related his *Annals* to the particular concerns of his house. His narrative takes place almost entirely in the West Frankish theater. On the other hand, Liudprand's fortunes changed for better or worse according to the struggles of the contenders for the Lombard throne and his subsequent service to Otto I, and during the course of his career both the man and his writing traveled between Italy, Germany, and Byzantium. His various texts accordingly display different tones, styles, and contradictory points of view. At some time after 950, his family having fallen out of favor with King Berengar II, Liudprand emigrated to the East Frankish kingdom. He attached himself to Otto's cause for the control of Italy, rising by 962 to become Bishop of Cremona. The high points of his clerical career were his presence at

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<sup>45</sup> Paolo Squatritti, introduction to *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 4.

the synod of 963 by which Otto deposed Pope John XII, and his famous mission to Constantinople in 968.<sup>46</sup>

Liudprand himself is an enigma—none of his contemporaries have left a record of him, so he is known only through his own work—and was also something of a chameleon, changing his literary color according to circumstances. The impression he left of himself seems to have been a carefully constructed image or series of images. In his translator's words, he projected "personae, not personality."<sup>47</sup> His largest piece of work, the six books of *Antapodosis* (Retribution), seems to have been the early medieval equivalent of a "blog," always undergoing updates and revisions, serving different missions at different points, and probably not intended for publication as a single finished text.<sup>48</sup> Its themes are revenge (as the title implies) on the political persecutors of his family,<sup>49</sup> a constant undermining of the legitimacy of the Italian ruling dynasties by revealing the scurrilous details of their personal goings-on,<sup>50</sup> and the making of a case for Otto's intervention.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 4-5 passim.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 6-7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 8-9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 11-14 passim.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 15.

As colorful and outspoken as Liudprand's writing is, the reader must take care not to interpret some of his language too literally or give too much weight to the face value of its modern sense in translation. His moral position tends to be inconsistent. The dynastic battles for Italy produced "enormous slaughter" (*maxima strages*)<sup>52</sup> and King Arnulf's support for one side has him "butchering" (*trucidat*) the population of Bergamo,<sup>53</sup> yet these terms feel merely descriptive, not pejorative. While the usual catalogue of barbarism is attributed to the invading Magyars—who "destroyed castles, burned churches, massacred communities, and drank the blood of their victims so that they would be feared more and more"<sup>54</sup>—impiety and hubris made the Christian defenders of Italy and Germany equally culpable for their own defeats in 899.<sup>55</sup> Even while bemoaning in verse the civilians killed during the Magyar sack of Pavia in 924,<sup>56</sup> Liudprand asserts that they deserved it because of their sins.<sup>57</sup> Because King Hugh had been "shamefully cast out" (*ex qua turpiter eiectus fuerat*) from Rome in 931, he "pitifully devastated" (*misere devastaret*) the surrounding country.<sup>58</sup> Liudprand seems

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<sup>52</sup> Liudprand of Cremona *Antapodosis*, ed. J. Becker (MGH SSrG 41 [Hannover and Leipzig, 1915]) I.XIX.19.1-2 (trans. Squatriti, 59).

<sup>53</sup> *Antapodosis* I.XXIII.21.3

<sup>54</sup> ...*castra diruunt, ecclesias igne consumunt, populos iugulant, et ut magis magisque timeantur, interfectorum sese sanguine potant. Antapodosis* II.II.36.28-37.2 (75).

<sup>55</sup> *Antapodosis* II.X, XI, XIII, XV, XVI.

<sup>56</sup> *Antapodosis* III.III.74-75.

<sup>57</sup> *Antapodosis* III.II.74.

<sup>58</sup> *Antapodosis* IV.II.104 (141).

here to give the moral high ground to neither party. In 941, certain mountain districts of Italy “were most cruelly depopulated by those Saracens who dwelt at Fraxinetum.”<sup>59</sup>

This gives some sense of empathy for the civilian casualties, but goes no farther than the simple description. Even a shocking mutilation *en masse*, which he might otherwise have called out as atrocity had it been done by a pagan enemy, seems to have been accepted as par for the course at the hands of Christian lords. When Margrave Tedald of Camerino and Benevento mockingly castrated Greek prisoners—fellow-Christians—taken during the struggle against Byzantine overlordship of 929-34, Liudprand identified him as “a certain hero” (*etiam heros quidam*).<sup>60</sup>

Liudprand’s text gives little indication that the bishops of Italy normally took part in military operations. It is probably not a coincidence that Italian bishoprics in the tenth century were rarely filled by Germans.<sup>61</sup> The native prelates appear instead as conspirators and backstabbers,<sup>62</sup> political (but not necessarily armed) rebels,<sup>63</sup> victims of civil unrest,<sup>64</sup> and the rallying point for expatriates caught up in the same on foreign

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<sup>59</sup> ...a Saracenis Fraxenetum inhabitantibus crudelissime depopulantur. *Antapodosis* V.IX.134.34-135.1 (175-6).

<sup>60</sup> *Antapodosis* IV.IX.108.5 (145).

<sup>61</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 270

<sup>62</sup> *Antapodosis* II.VI.40-41, III.XLI.93-95.

<sup>63</sup> *Antapodosis* II.LVII.63-64, II.LXV.66-67.

<sup>64</sup> *Antapodosis* III.LII.101.

soil.<sup>65</sup> The only “legitimate” participation Liudprand seems to have included is that of Otto’s German bishops at the siege of Breisach, which ends in treachery and desertion on the part of Frederick of Mainz.<sup>66</sup>

If positive examples of bishops going to war are absent or ambiguous in Liudprand’s work, he leaves no doubt as to his position on church magnates bearing arms in person. Two striking examples bear this out. The first is Bishop Manasses of Arles, who deserted his see to follow his kinsman Hugh of Provence—a contender for Italian rule—for ambition’s sake. King Hugh gave him the benefice of three churches and yet, “...not content even with these, Manasses appropriated the March of Trent, where, with the Devil instigating it, *he ceased to be a bishop when he began to be a soldier.*”<sup>67</sup> This came as a result of Hugh’s creation in 935 of a marcher region in northeastern Italy combining secular and ecclesiastical authority,<sup>68</sup> similar to Brun of Cologne’s promotion to duke of Lotharingia. Liudprand’s criticism seems to fly in the face of his royal patron’s policy, as he did not begin writing *Retribution* until 958,<sup>69</sup> by which time Brun’s binary role had long since been a *fait accompli*.

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<sup>65</sup> *Antapodosis* V.XXII.143-44.

<sup>66</sup> *Antapodosis* IV.XXVII.122-23.

<sup>67</sup> *Ac nec his quidem contentus Tridentinam adeptus est marcam, quo impellente diabolo, dum miles esse inciperet, episcopus esse desineret.* *Antapodosis* IV.VI.105.21-23 (142, emphasis added).

<sup>68</sup> Squatriti 142, fn. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Squatriti, intro. 4.



Liudprand puts a weak scriptural argument into Manasses' mouth to justify his see-switching, then refutes him at length, but does not address his militarism other than to scorn it.<sup>70</sup> Manasses is mentioned again in *Retribution*<sup>71</sup> and is cited in the opening chapter of *Concerning King Otto* as one of the reasons for the king's intervention in Italy, inasmuch as he was appointed Archbishop of Milan "contrary to all law and decency."<sup>72</sup> Liudprand's indignation shows again in a similar incident in which Berengar deprived the pious bishop of Brescia of his see "with no council being held, no decision by the bishops."<sup>73</sup> These comments bear out the current thinking that Otto could not simply appoint bishops at will as the theory of *Reichskirchensystem* would suppose, for in this case Liudprand would surely not have criticized his patron's policy so frankly.

The second and clearest piece of evidence for Liudprand's position on martial churchmen is his treatment of Pope John XII. In *Concerning King Otto*, John's status in the text changes from "supreme pontiff and universal pope" (*summus pontifex et universalis papa*)<sup>74</sup> to virtual traitor against the emperor two chapters later.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>70</sup> *Antapodosis* IV.VII.105-7.

<sup>71</sup> *Antapodosis* V.XXVI.145.

<sup>72</sup> ...*quae Mannassen Arelatensem episcopum contra ius fasque Mediolanensi sedi praefecerat*. Liudprand *Liber de rebus gestis Ottonis magni imperatoris*, ed. J. Becker (MGH SSrG 41 [Hannover and Leipzig, 1915]), I.159.21-22 (220).

<sup>73</sup> ...*nullo concilio habito, nulla episcoporum deliberatione constituit*. *Antapodosis* V.XXIX.148.10-11 (191).

<sup>74</sup> Liudprand *Gestis Ottonis* I.159.5 (219).

<sup>75</sup> *Gestis Ottonis* IV.160-62.

Liudprand introduces him by his full title to emphasize the magnitude of his supposed moral failure. As mentioned above, Liudprand was one of Otto's ambassadors to the synod called in Rome to depose the inconvenient pontiff. There, before a lengthy roster of bishops and other noblemen,<sup>76</sup> John was accused—among other outrageous charges—of “[girding] himself with a sword... helmet and breastplate.”<sup>77</sup> This phrase is reiterated twice more during the proceedings, most dramatically during the testimony of “the clergy and the whole Roman people”:

“For if you do not accept our faithfulness, at least you ought to believe the troops of the lord emperor, against whom John charged five days ago, girt with a sword, bearing a shield, helmet, and breastplate. Only the Tiber, which flowed between them, prevented John, decked out like that, from being captured by the imperial troops.” Immediately the holy emperor said: “There are as many witnesses as there are fighters in our army.”<sup>78</sup>

Granted that the pope was no ordinary bishop, and that Liudprand is vigorously cranking the handle of the propaganda machine here to enhance Otto's case for his unprecedented deposition, surely Liudprand would not have played up this offense so prominently if he thought it could be turned back on Otto's own bishops to the emperor's

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<sup>76</sup> *Gestis Ottonis* IX.165-66.

<sup>77</sup> ... *ense accinctum, galea et lorica*... *Gestis Ottonis* X.167.22 (228). Squatriti's translation of *lorica* as “breastplate” (and he is not the only offender) is misleading, as plate armor was virtually unknown during the medieval period prior to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. A better reading would be “mail,” or simply, “armor.”

<sup>78</sup> ‘*Quod si fidem nobis non admittitis, exercitui domni imperatoris saltem debetis credere, cui ante quinque dies ense accinctus, clipeo, galea et lorica indutus occurrit; solus Tiberis, qui interfluxit, ne sic ornatus ab exercitu caperetur, impedivit.*’ *Mox sanctus imperator dixit: ‘Tot sunt huius rei testes, quot sunt nostro in exercitu bellatores.*’ *Gestis Ottonis* XI.168.19-25 (229-30). See also XV.171.24-25.

detriment. This is especially unlikely since Otto himself appears as a key witness for the prosecution. Indeed, a militant pope was not without precedent, per the case of John X who did battle with the Saracens.<sup>79</sup> Regardless, Liudprand made sure to show John XII getting his just desserts, describing how the Devil killed him before Otto could take military action to oust him again.<sup>80</sup> This seems to be the sole instance in Liudprand's work of direct supernatural intervention.<sup>81</sup>

Liudprand is unusual amongst the Ottonian chroniclers in giving Satan a walk-on role in the course of historical events—in addition to the demise of the pope, the Devil is blamed for turning Manasses of Arles into a soldier (above) and he inspires Otto's brother Henry to rebel against him in 939<sup>82</sup>—yet God does not figure very prominently either. The influence of divine power on military action is sporadic and variable, and sometimes, in cases when the enemy comes out ahead, Liudprand frankly admits that God's plan is a mystery to him.<sup>83</sup> Yet he is careful to admonish Otto to give God credit for his victories<sup>84</sup> and the king or those fighting for his causes appear to be the most frequent recipients of reinforcement from on high, as it were. The Swabians overcame the rebels Eberhard and Giselbert in 939 against the odds, as Liudprand explains rather

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<sup>79</sup> Prinz 143.

<sup>80</sup> *Gestis Ottonis* XX.173-4.

<sup>81</sup> Squatriti 235, fn.42.

<sup>82</sup> *Antapodosis* IV.XVIII.114.

<sup>83</sup> *Antapodosis* I.III.5, V.III.131.

<sup>84</sup> *Antapodosis* IV.XXVI.120-22 passim.

obliquely, "...with God ordaining it not by means of speech but by inspiration... [He] lowered his hand on those who made trouble for a king whom He recognized as walking in his ways."<sup>85</sup> Indeed, even when Otto was unable to cross a river to aid his army in person, his prayers served as a sort of divine force multiplier that ensured its victory.<sup>86</sup> In other cases Liudprand credits the piety of Christian troops to their advantage, even when fighting in service to an unworthy lord (such as Pope John),<sup>87</sup> or else blames their defeats on their sins.<sup>88</sup> In general, Liudprand never ascribes victory or defeat to God's direct intervention but only acknowledges that battles turn out for the best when God is "well disposed" (*Deo tamen propitio*).<sup>89</sup>

Liudprand never admits to having had military experience of his own, but this does not prevent him from waving the flag of martial pride. This is most noticeable in his final major text, verbosely entitled *The Embassy of Liudprand the Cremonese Bishop to the Constantinopolitan Emperor Nicephoros Phocas on Behalf of the August Ottos and Adelheid*.<sup>90</sup> Much of his verbal sparring with the Byzantine emperor is about the

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<sup>85</sup> *Verum iubente Deo non locutionis, sed inspirationis... quemadmodum super regem tribulantes Dominus manum miserit, quem in viis suis ambulasse cognovit. Antapodosis IV.XXIX.125.7-8 and 24-25.*

<sup>86</sup> *Antapodosis IV.XXIV.117-18.*

<sup>87</sup> *Antapodosis II.LII.62-LIV.62 passim.*

<sup>88</sup> *Antapodosis II.X.42-XVI.45 passim.*

<sup>89</sup> *Antapodosis IV.IV.105.2 (142).*

<sup>90</sup> The title is shortened in Becker's edition (MGH SSrG 41 [Hannover and Leipzig, 1915]) to the more manageable *Liudprandi relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*.

comparative worth of the Greek and German troops. When the emperor insulted the training and physical prowess of Otto's men,<sup>91</sup> Liudprand retorted, "...the coming wars will demonstrate what type of men you are and how pugnacious we are," essentially challenging him to do his worst.<sup>92</sup> He then reported to Otto that the king could easily overcome the entire Byzantine army with a mere forty men,<sup>93</sup> and continued to make disparaging comments about the poor quality of the Byzantine military later in the text.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Liudprand *Legatione* XI.182.

<sup>92</sup> '*...quales vos estis quamve pugnaces nos simus, bella proxima demonstrabunt.*' *Legatione* XII.183.6-8 (247).

<sup>93</sup> *Legatione* XXIX.191.

<sup>94</sup> *Legatione* XLIV.198-XLV.199.

## 10. PARTISAN MONKS: ADALBERT AND WIDUKIND

Adalbert of Magdeburg, *Continuatione Treverensi*

Adalbert, originally an aristocratic Lotharingian monk of St-Maximin in Trier and subsequently a chaplain in the entourage of Otto I, was promoted in 966 to abbot of Wissembourg, where he most likely composed his work. He reached the height of his career as the first archbishop of Magdeburg, Otto's "personal favorite" see, serving from 968 until his death in 981.<sup>1</sup> As Adalbert was a product of the royal chancery under Otto's brother Brun, his writing very much represents the Ottonian court point of view.<sup>2</sup> The *Continuatione* was a conscious and deliberate bid to emphasize the continuity between the old Frankish and the new Saxon dynasties, written as it was at the apex of the new order's success—Otto's conquest of Italy and coronation as emperor—rather than, as with Regino, in the twilight of the failing Carolingian empire.<sup>3</sup> He may also have intended it as a means to enlighten and instruct the young Otto II.<sup>4</sup>

Compared to the epic grandeur of Widukind or the self-consciously abrasive Liudprand, Adalbert's brief addendum to Regino may justifiably be called "dry and

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<sup>1</sup> MacLean, intro. to *History and Politics* 55.

<sup>2</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 28.

<sup>3</sup> MacLean 56-7 passim.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 58.

factual,”<sup>5</sup> but his editorial voice is easy to pinpoint when it emerges. Examples are his self-satisfied endorsement of the battlefield death of the impious usurper Robert at Soissons,<sup>6</sup> his scorn for the cowardice of Charles the Simple,<sup>7</sup> and his sarcastic epitaph for the ever-unreliable Archbishop Frederick of Mainz (quoted above).<sup>8</sup> His Ottonian partisanship seems circumspect at times; while the king leads his forces to deeds *fortia et bellica* at the siege of Breisach,<sup>9</sup> he receives little personal credit for his triumph at the Lech,<sup>10</sup> which achievement figures so prominently in others’ accounts. Adalbert nonetheless carefully presents a picture of dynastic legitimacy. He bookends this at the one end with praise for Henry I, turning his “hostile intent” against the empire’s neighbors into sanctified aggression,<sup>11</sup> while simultaneously eulogizing him as an imperial expansionist against paganism and as an “adherent of peace.”<sup>12</sup> On the other end, he offers repeated criticism for the faithlessness of the Romans in general and the pope in particular.<sup>13</sup> As with the majority of the Frankish-Saxon writers, he reserves his

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>6</sup> Adalbert a.922.157.

<sup>7</sup> Adalbert a.923.157.

<sup>8</sup> Adalbert a.954.168.

<sup>9</sup> Adalbert a.939.160.32.

<sup>10</sup> Adalbert a.955.168.

<sup>11</sup> Adalbert a.928.158 (239), and a.934.159.

<sup>12</sup> Adalbert a.936.159 (241).

<sup>13</sup> Adalbert a.963.173-a.965.176 passim.

greatest vitriol for the faithless, especially amongst churchmen, such as the bishops “worthless and hateful to God” who desert Otto’s cause and support his enemies.<sup>14</sup>

Adalbert makes scant mention of bishops or abbots participating in the king’s military campaigns, although other sources make it clear that this continued to be the norm. It may be assumed that Adalbert expected the practice was common enough knowledge to not need more than the occasional highlight in his terse and compact narrative. The presence of Archbishop Frederick of Mainz and Bishop Rothard of Strassburg in Otto’s siege camp at Breisach, to which they had brought troops, is one instance;<sup>15</sup> King Henry’s enlistment of Archbishop Roger of Trier to besiege Metz is another.<sup>16</sup> Although it is probable that Otto’s Italian expedition drew heavily on ecclesiastical contingents,<sup>17</sup> Adalbert relates only that two churchmen—Henry, archbishop of Trier, and Abbot Gerrie of Wissembourg—were among the casualties from disease on the king’s return march.<sup>18</sup> While their official military role is not prominent, Adalbert is quick to point out any

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<sup>14</sup> *...sed et quidam ecclesiastici viri nequam et Deo odibiles...* Adalbert a.939.160.15-16 (243).

<sup>15</sup> *Unde Fridericus archiepsicopus Mogontinensis et Ruohardus episcopus Strazburgensis fixis in obsidione tentoriss et relictis copiarum, quas detulerant...* Adalbert a.939.161.1-3. MacLean translates *copiarum* as “packs of supplies” (244), but the word also means forces or troops—which leads to a different interpretation of the bishops’ intended role in the siege.

<sup>16</sup> Adalbert a.923.157.

<sup>17</sup> Reuter states, “The field armies of the period would have been much smaller without [bishops and abbots]”—“Imperial Church System,” 364—and cites the *Indiculus Loricarum* (MGH Const., ed. L. Weiland [Hanover 1893], 1.632, no. 436) that shows the numbers for the Italian campaign of Otto II in 981, implying that the proportions of church troops were similar under both Otto I and his son. Note that troops were still made up only of secular vassals, never clerics.

<sup>18</sup> Adalbert a. 964.174.35-37.



instance of church lords taking part in rebellion, private feud, or becoming casualties of civil strife. When Henry I invested Metz (above), his purpose was to bring the rebellious Bishop Witgar to heel. His successor, Benno, was apparently foisted on the city without the consent of the people, who blinded him.<sup>19</sup> Blinding was also meted out as official punishment to the rebel archbishop Herold of Salzburg.<sup>20</sup> Bishop Waldo of Como prosecuted a feud with Count Udo when he “seized the island of Lake Como and completely destroyed the fortifications there”;<sup>21</sup> the bishop was later saved from being blinded when his enemy was restrained by royal authority.<sup>22</sup> A bishop’s position seems to have been hazardous enough even without the added danger of royal military duty.

War is a constant and unremarkable presence in the *Continuazione*, like the weather. Of the many clashes with the Magyars, only one rated commentary: “During Lent the Hungarians, led by the king’s enemies, after they had crossed the Rhine, invaded Gaul and committed unheard-of evils against God’s churches, and returned through Italy.”<sup>23</sup> (Adalbert presents this as a triple outrage: not only have Christian rebels made the pagans their allies, the invasion happens during a holy period and churches are desecrated.) As

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<sup>19</sup> Adalbert a.927.158.

<sup>20</sup> Adalbert a.954.167.

<sup>21</sup> *Ea tempestate Waldo Cumanus episcopus insulam in Cumano lacu cepit et muntiones in ea a solo destruxit...* Adalbert a.964.175.3-5 (267).

<sup>22</sup> Adalbert a.966.177, 9-13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ungarii ducentibus inimicis regis in quadragesima Rheno transito pervadentes Galliam inaudita mala in ecclesias Dei fecerunt et per Italiam redierunt.* Adalbert a.954.168.7-10 (256).

Adalbert seems to have taken the military role of bishops and abbots as a *fait accompli*, there is little evidence to be gleaned from the text to show whether he approved of militant churchmen or not. However, one may safely ascribe to him a positive view, or at worst a neutral one, given his opportunity to criticize and his disinclination to do so. The point that tips the balance in favor of approval is his treatment of Archbishop Brun of Cologne, his former superior in the royal chapel and the archetype of the Ottonian ecclesiastical warlord. Brun appears once in the text in a military role, in the same passage as the Hungarian raid noted above: “In the same year *dux* Conrad was going to meet [in battle] the Lotharingians under *dux* Brun the archbishop at the estate of Rümelingen in the Bliesgau, but at the last minute he stayed where he was, because it was against the king as God did not wish it to be done.”<sup>24</sup> Adalbert presents Brun’s controversial assumption of the archbishop’s miter “along with... the *ducatus* and rule over the whole Lotharingian kingdom”<sup>25</sup> without expressing approval or disapproval in so many words and then praises him on his death as “a man extremely worthy of the *ducatus* and the episcopate alike.”<sup>26</sup> Brun’s unique dual title and royal status set him above the rank and file of Ottonian bishops, but as will be shown in additional sources below, he is a useful touchstone for indicating a given writer’s opinions.

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<sup>24</sup> *In eodem anno Cuonradus dux cum Lothariensibus duce Brun archiepiscopo in Blesensi pago apud villam Rimilinga congressurus erat; sed in ultimo, quia contra regem erat, Deo volente ne fieret, remanebat.* Adalbert a.954.168.4-7 (256).

<sup>25</sup> *...cui Brun frater regis succedens totius Lothariensis regni ducatum et regimen cum episcopatu suscepit.* Adalbert a.953.167.29-30 (255).

<sup>26</sup> *Brun quoque archiepiscopus, germanus imperatoris, vir ducatu pariter et episcopatu dignissimus, V. Idus Octobris obiit...* Adalbert a.965.176.31-33 (269).

Widukind of Corvey, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri tres*

The Benedictine monastery of Corvey on the Weser was founded in 822 during the reign of Louis the Pious to bolster the religious and political integration of the recently conquered Saxons into the Frankish empire. From the late Carolingian period on, but especially during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the great noble families of Saxony brought their younger sons there to follow the Rule. One such monk, Widukind, became the author of the monumental history of his people, the *Three Books of the Deeds of the Saxons*.<sup>27</sup> Little is known of Widukind of Corvey himself, but his perspective is that of the Saxon aristocracy and in sympathy with the Liudolfinger dynasty that emerged from it.<sup>28</sup>

Widukind's work covers a span of time from the mythical origins of the Saxon people up through the death of Otto I in 973. He probably completed the greater part of his text by 967 or 968.<sup>29</sup> His understanding of historical antiquity was no more reliable than that of any other medieval; he subscribed, for example, to the traditional delusion of tracing the Saxon bloodline to Alexander the Great.<sup>30</sup> However, he almost certainly knew some of the important late Roman and early medieval chroniclers who preceded him, including

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<sup>27</sup> The shortened version of the Latin title, *Res gestae Saxonicae*, will be used here.

<sup>28</sup> Ekkehart Rotter and Bernd Schneidmüller, introduction to Widukind of Corvey, *Res gestae Saxonicae (Die Sachsengeschichte)* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co, 1981), 3-5 passim.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 6.

Jordanes, Bede, Paul the Deacon, and Einhard,<sup>31</sup> and he appears to have gotten the sequence of events for his own century more or less correct. Regardless, his point of view counts for more in the present study than his factual accuracy.

Part and parcel of his praise for the Saxons, and for the Liudolfinger kings, was his appreciation of their warlike nature. While the reigns of the early Ottonians seemed to consist of one rebellion after another, Widukind, unlike Ruotger, seems to have felt divided loyalties between his king and his countrymen.<sup>32</sup> He took a certain delight in spinning scenic and tactical details into his numerous accounts of battles. Otto's siege of Regensburg in 953 is particularly colorful,<sup>33</sup> although this may have been based on classical models in lieu of his own experience. His exciting tale of the Battle of the Lech is one of the standard sources for that event and was probably drawn from eyewitness accounts (though it appears to suffer from errors of geography).<sup>34</sup> While his voice sometimes reflects a certain sympathy towards the civilians caught up in the sieges, he did not feel the need to justify the warfare that either Henry or Otto conducts; it was simply part of the understood duty of the king. Henry's mission was to pacify and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 7-8; also Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 16.

<sup>33</sup> Widukind III.35.188-37.192.

<sup>34</sup> Bowlus 11-12.

reorder a war-torn kingdom,<sup>35</sup> and Widukind felt that Otto's generous and forgiving nature<sup>36</sup> forced him to deal harshly with incorrigible rebels throughout his reign.

Widukind naturally emphasized the evil perpetrated by disturbers of the peace and pagan enemies who ravage the countryside. An altercation in 937 between two feuding noblemen resulted in murders, devastated fields, and "endless burning" (*incendiis nusquam abstinere*).<sup>37</sup> The Magyars who invaded during Henry's reign burned cities, towns, and monasteries, committed slaughter, and indeed threatened Saxony with "extinction" (*depopulationem*).<sup>38</sup> The Slavs invaded in 939 with the same arson and devastation,<sup>39</sup> and the "Avars" (Magyars) committed similar atrocities again in 954.<sup>40</sup> Otto roundly condemned the rebels who had allied themselves with these "enemies of God and men" that laid waste to his kingdom.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, Widukind rarely shows Otto himself resorting to pillage and property damage as a form of warfare; most of his campaigns seem rather tidy. An instance to the contrary is at Regensburg, where, unable to break the rebel defenses, the king's army razed the surrounding territory and spared

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<sup>35</sup> Widukind I.27.68-70.

<sup>36</sup> Widukind II.7.114, II.10.116, III.8.168.

<sup>37</sup> Widukind II.10.116.9-10.

<sup>38</sup> Widukind I.32.74.21-22.

<sup>39</sup> Widukind II.20.132.

<sup>40</sup> Widukind III.30.182-84.

<sup>41</sup> ...*si non Dei hominumque inimici... Modo regnum meum habent desolatum*. Widukind III.32.186.3-4.

nothing.<sup>42</sup> Widukind voiced no criticism here. Of course, when Otto burned and laid waste to pagan Slavic lands, the monk felt even less need to justify it.<sup>43</sup>

Widukind's piety, such as is conveyed in his writing, seems surprisingly scant for a monk. He sometimes made God the author of Christian victories, but gave equal credit to the human actors. Following Henry's triumph over the Slavs in 929, although God had a hand in the weather and the inspiration of the German troops, the soldiers praised their commanders and commended each other for their good fortune when the day was won.<sup>44</sup> Otto rode into battle at the Lech under his customary angel standard and encouraged his army by telling them that the enemy lacked the assistance of God.<sup>45</sup> However, after the battle, Otto's victory celebrations emphasized secular glory over God's. "The divine," not "God," was praised in every church, while Otto was acclaimed as "father of the Fatherland and emperor" by his troops for "the greatest victory won by a king in two hundred years."<sup>46</sup> In fact, with the exception of a long diatribe against the pagan Danes,<sup>47</sup> there is very little sense anywhere in the *Res gestae Saxonicae* that Widukind saw any of

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<sup>42</sup> ...*absque animabus exercitus a nulla re abstinebat, sed omnia vastabat*. Widukind III.26.182.10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Widukind III.53.206.

<sup>44</sup> ...*omnes laudant duces, unusquisque vero militum predicat alium, ignavum quoque, ut in tali | fortuna solet fieri*. Widukind I.36.86.21-23.

<sup>45</sup> ... *quod maximi est nobis solatii, auxilio Dei*. Widukind III.46.200.7-8.

<sup>46</sup> ...*pater patriae imperatorque appellatus est; decretis | proinde honoribus et dignis laudibus summae divinitati per singulas ecclesias... Neque enim tanta victoria quisquam regum intra ducentos annos ante eum laetatus est*. Widukind III.49.202.

<sup>47</sup> Widukind III.65.216-18.

the warfare of the Reich as a holy endeavor against the enemies of Christ and the Church. He seems to have been more interested in imitating the classical topos of expressing admiration for the valor of his pagan enemies.<sup>48</sup>

Read in isolation, the *Res gestae Saxonicae* gives the misleading impression that Ottonian bishops and abbots had little to do with warfare. The only relevant event Widukind highlighted (other than his discussion of Brun of Cologne, below) was the siege of Breisach in 939 from which some of Otto's bishops deserted in haste, "abandoning their tents and furniture."<sup>49</sup> He names only Rothard of Strassburg, but the prime mover here was Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, whose notorious act of infidelity was also recorded by Adalbert and Liudprand. Neither Widukind nor his fellow writers were entirely clear on the role these bishops played in the king's campaign.<sup>50</sup> In any case, Widukind goes into some detail about Frederick's political behavior and his uncanny knack for staying firmly outside Otto's good graces, although he coyly dances around the issue of his culpability and is careful to couch much of his account as hearsay. He introduces the archbishop as "an excellent man, proven in every religious virtue" who

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<sup>48</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 16.

<sup>49</sup> *Nam summi pontifices relictis tentoriis et alia qualibet suppellectili*. Widukind II.24.138.2-3.

<sup>50</sup> Widukind refers to them leaving behind their *suppellectili*, "possessions" or "furniture." Adalbert (a.939, 161.1-3) uses the word *copiarum*, possibly meaning "forces" or "troops," but translated by MacLean (244) as "packs of supplies." Liudprand (*Antapodosis* IV.XXVII.122.20-24) mentions only their tents. If the bishops had indeed brought troops, it seems likely that their abrupt departure would have thrown their levies into confusion and affected the outcome of the siege, but one can only speculate.

mediated between Duke Eberhard of Franconia and the king.<sup>51</sup> He goes on to describe a property dispute between the archbishop and the monastery of Fulda, of which “there were some who thought that Archbishop Frederick did not act out of pure intentions, but thought rather to denigrate the honorable man and the King's loyal abbot, Hadamar.”<sup>52</sup> Widukind likewise equivocates about Frederick’s failure to find a resolution with the rebels Liudolf and Conrad in Mainz, instead diverting the reader with lavish praise for Frederick’s piety and generosity. He recuses himself neatly from taking sides by declaring, “It falls not to us to pass a rash judgment on him... it is for the Lord to judge these accusations.”<sup>53</sup> Then, in the throes of the rebellion in Bavaria:

“...[Frederick,] out of fear of the king, as he himself said, left his episcopal duties to lead a solitary and eremetical life. Meanwhile, the other bishops in Bavaria wavered not a little between the two parties, now supporting the king and now his opponents, for they could neither safely break with the king, nor without detriment to themselves remain loyal to him.”<sup>54</sup>

In spite of his unabashed partisanship towards Saxony and the Liudolfing kings, Widukind could not bring himself to condemn Frederick for his tepid loyalty and clumsy

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<sup>51</sup> ... *optimi inprimis viri et omni religione probatissimi Frithurici*... Widukind II.13.122.15-16.

<sup>52</sup> *Fuerunt autem quidam qui summum pontificem Frithericum hoc non pure, sed fecte fecisse arbitrati sunt, quatinus venerabilem virum regique fidelissimum abbatem Hadumarum quoquo modo posset dehonestaret.* Widukind II.37.152.12-16.

<sup>53</sup> *De eo nostrum arbitramur nequaquam aliquid temere iudicare... caeterum de accusatis causis qui iudicat Dominus est.* Widukind III.15.174, 1-2, 5-6.

<sup>54</sup> *Summus pontifex interea, ut ipse aiebat, timore Regis, officio pontificali amisso, hermiticam cum solitariis ducebat vitam. Non minima quoque caeteris pontificibus cunctatio erat in Boioaria, dum favent partibus, nunc regi assistendo, nunc alienas partes adiuvando, quia nec sine periculo alienabantur a rege nec sine sui detrimento ei adhaerebant.* Widukind III.27.182.



handling of secular duties, ultimately praising him on his death in 954.<sup>55</sup> While the above passage gives us an intriguing glimpse into the difficulties the bishops must have faced performing their political balancing act during fractious times, it provides no insight into what, if any, military actions their support entailed.

Unlike the outspoken Ruotger, Widukind seems to have taken great pains to be diplomatic in his handling of controversial bishops, perhaps in part because Ruotger enjoyed the direct patronage of the leading archbishop of the Reich where the monk of Corvey did not. Widukind treated the vigorous and warlike Brun, Frederick's would-be antithesis, with discretion as well, but clearly in accordance with the royal party's platform. Brun is mentioned early in the text as the third child of Henry I. Even in this passing reference, Widukind was on the defensive: "...we have seen [Brun] take on the duties of both an archbishop and a great duke. No one should consider him worthy of punishment, as we have read that holy Samuel and many others were priests and judges equally."<sup>56</sup> When Brun assumed his dual mantle of authority in 953:

"The younger brother, Lord Brun, was clever and superior in knowledge and in every virtue and industry. The king placed him over the unruly Lotharingians, and he cleaned the region of thieves and so firmly enforced the law that the greatest order and the most complete peace prevailed in those parts."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Widukind III.41.192.

<sup>56</sup> *...quem pontificus | summi ac ducis magni vidimus officium gerentum. Ac ne quis eum culpabilem super hoc dixerit, cum Samuelem sanctum et alios plures sacerdotes pariter legamus et iudices.* Widukind I.31.74.7-10, referring to I Samuel 7.15.

<sup>57</sup> *Iunior vero fratrum domnus Brun magnus erat ingenio, magnus scientia et omni virtute ac industria. Quem cum rex prefecisset genti indomitae Lothariorum, regionem a latronibus*

Brun is mentioned only one more time, when he serves as intervenor to allow the rebel Egbert back into royal favor.<sup>58</sup> This abbreviated catalog of his deeds, while positive, seems like short shrift for a powerful prince who not only caused such indignity in the community of bishops—if Ruotger’s defense is any indication—but who was also the king’s right-hand man, instrumental in pacifying Lotharingia and securing it as a vital strategic region of the Reich. Widukind gives him credit for this in brief, but then in his extensive descriptions of the campaigns fought against Liudolf and Conrad the Red from 953-4, he seems to ignore Brun altogether. Instead, he ascribes the victories only to King Otto and his secular vassals. Writing as he did almost concurrently with Ruotger, Widukind was obviously aware of the controversy and of the “Mainz theme” of criticism for the duke-bishop<sup>59</sup> preached first by Frederick and then his successor William, a “wise and prudent man” (*vir sapiens et prudens*).<sup>60</sup> Yet Widukind also lavished praise on Otto and his family throughout his work. Exercising what seems to have been his trademark discretion regarding the affairs of bishops, he gave Brun his due, but only just, and refrained from criticizing the Mainz opposition. There was probably no profit in it. After

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*purgavit et in tantum disciplina legali instruxit, ut summa ratio summaque pax illis in partibus locum tenerent.* Widukind II.36.150.25-151.2.

<sup>58</sup> Widukind III.59.214.

<sup>59</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 27.

<sup>60</sup> Widukind III.73.228.24.

all, by 961, Archbishop William had been reconciled with his father Otto and shared guardianship with Brun of the 6-year-old heir, his half-brother Otto II.<sup>61</sup>

As with Adalbert's *Continuation*, the *Res gestae Saxonicae* provides little evidence for the military duties of bishops and abbots and none at all for their actual participation in combat. The role played by Rothard and Frederick at the siege of Breisach is not fully explained. The bishops of Bavaria took sides during the rebellion in 953, but what form their aid to either the royal or the rebel party took is equally unclear. Brun's dual role is acknowledged but not elaborated on. Beyond this, in his vivid account of the battle at the Lech, Widukind made no mention of Bishop Udalrich of Augsburg and his important role in the campaign. While Gerhard did not compose his *Vita Uodalrici* until 985, it seems odd for Widukind to have been unaware of the deeds of this "pillar of Otto's realm."<sup>62</sup> Might Widukind have found the idea of a church lord commanding troops so distasteful that he chose to ignore it? This is highly unlikely, as his brief defense of Brun shows. We are left to assume that Widukind, like Adalbert, felt the practice was so ubiquitous that it went without saying.

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<sup>61</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 48.

<sup>62</sup> Bowlus 101.

## 11. HOLY ALLIES: BRUN AND UDALRICH

Ruotger of Cologne, *Vita Sancti Brunonis archiepiscopo Coloniensis*

The monk Ruotger, schoolmaster at the monastery of St. Pantaleon in Cologne, wrote his *Vita Sancti Brunonis* shortly after the archbishop's death in 965. It was certainly finished before the death of Brun's successor Folcmar in 969.<sup>1</sup> The work appears to have been original, even pioneering. No literary models have been found upon which the *Vita* could have been directly based, though there is a similarity in style to the brevity and matter-of-fact tone of Einhard's biography of Charlemagne. Ruotger certainly did not intend the *Vita* as a hagiography. Its language is "highly charged and confrontational... well removed from *sermo humilis*."<sup>2</sup> While Ruotger devoted a good part of the text to Brun's admirable pastoral conduct, good works and efforts on behalf of his diocese, and devotion to the liberal arts, and described his death at age 40 at some length in the hagiographical tradition, he deliberately omitted any catalogue of posthumous miracles associated with a saint's life. Those who came to his tomb to pray, he said, "did not look for miracles, but paid attention to his life and recollected his teaching."<sup>3</sup> Rather than

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting, "Ruotger, the Life of Bruno and Cologne Cathedral Library," in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*, ed. Lesley Smith and Benedicta Ward (London and Rio Grande, OH: The Hambledon Press, 1992), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Frequentant locum sepulture eius, certatim memorant, quid fecerit, quid docuerit, qualis vixerit, qualis obierit. Signa non querunt...* Ruotger *Vita Sancti Brunonis Archiepiscopi Coloniensis*, ed. Hatto Kallfelz (in *Lebensbeschreibungen Einiger Bischöfe des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts*, FSGA 22: 169-260 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973]) 48.254.13-16. Trans. Mayr-Harting in *Church and Cosmos*, 15.

praise his saintliness for its own sake, Ruotger intended to demonstrate that Brun's illustrious if short career, during which he held the offices of both archbishop and duke, was vital to the pacification of Lotharingia without being incompatible with the archetype of a pious bishop established by Gregory the Great in his *Pastoral Care*.

The idea of *pax* was central to Ruotger's premise that the security of the Reich was a prerequisite for the development of religion and virtue. Thus, in Ruotger's eyes, the protection of religious institutions should be equally as important to a bishop as his purely spiritual duties. He interpreted this obligation broadly to justify a whole range of secular actions on Brun's part, including defense against the encroachments of the lay nobility and participation in military-political affairs on an international scale.<sup>4</sup> Given the prevailing conditions, Ruotger held that clerical control of worldly affairs should be decided on a case-by-case basis, just as each bishop was expected to support his diocese in a different way according to need and his means.<sup>5</sup> By drawing on the words of St. Paul to do good not only before God but also before men,<sup>6</sup> Ruotger formed an interpretation of Brun's *vita activa* that justified interference in all worldly affairs, including on the

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<sup>4</sup> Hoffmann 34.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffmann 39. For a brief list of the material contributions of Ottonian bishops, see Francis J. Tschan, *Saint Bernward of Hildesheim*, University of Notre Dame: Publications in Medieval Studies 6: 12-13 (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1942), 57-65 passim.

<sup>6</sup> *...providentes bona non tantum coram Deo, sed etiam coram hominibus*. Ruotger 37.236.12-13. Both Hoffmann and Kallfelz cite Romans 12:17 for this phrase, but the correct source is in fact II Corinthians 8:21, per Mayr-Harting, "Ruotger, the Life of Bruno and Cologne Cathedral Library," 42.

battlefield.<sup>7</sup> In short, Ruotger cast Brun as an agent of *Realpolitik* responsive to the needs of his time rather than a blind adherent to a naïve theory of the ecclesiastical ideal.<sup>8</sup> Hartmut Hoffmann proposes that the rising feudal power of the nobility rendered the power of the central state uncertain, obliging the church to take control of secular functions out of enlightened self-interest.<sup>9</sup> While this theory may seem apt in retrospect, it puts the cart before the horse by allowing for neither the long tradition of bishops as provincial defense leaders nor for their noble prerogative to bear arms.

No magnate of the church had been entrusted with this much power before or since. Even those who supported Brun acknowledged the controversy.<sup>10</sup> Even without the evidence left by his critics, the quantity of ink Ruotger spent justifying his patron's position proves that the ideal he put forward was by no means universally accepted.<sup>11</sup> Flodoard of Reims, as shown, was one detractor of “the bishop who had become a duke” (*ex praesule ducem*).<sup>12</sup> He was a local witness to Brun's intervention against the Normans in West Francia,<sup>13</sup> which stands out as an extreme example of the unauthorized

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<sup>7</sup> Hoffmann 37.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Mayr-Harting, “Ruotger” 33.

<sup>12</sup> Flodoard a.957.144.5 (62, 39B).

<sup>13</sup> Ruotger 39-40.240 passim.

practice of worldly power.<sup>14</sup> Ruotger saw this rather as a righteous defense of greater Christendom, and added a proto-humanistic note by paraphrasing the classical playwright Terence, saying that “nothing of humanity was foreign to him” (*humani nihil alienum*).<sup>15</sup>

Resistance also formed around Archbishop Frederick of Mainz and his successor William. Mainz was a rival of Cologne for preeminence under the Ottonians, and the ongoing “Mainz theme” was comparable to Liudprand’s strident criticism of the bishop-turned-warlord Manasses of Arles.<sup>16</sup> William (Brun’s nephew, an otherwise loyal member of the royal party) complained in a letter to Pope Agapetus II that a duke and a bishop ought not to claim one another’s functions. To such critics, Ruotger fired back:

There are some, ignorant of divine ordering, who make an issue of why a bishop should deal with secular and military affairs when he received only the care of souls. To these people, had they any sense, there was an easy answer if they considered the good of peace, as great as it was unusual, especially in these parts [i.e., Lotharingia], which was spread far and wide through this protector and teacher of a faithful people.<sup>17</sup>

The picture of Frederick that emerges from the *Vita* is that of Brun’s antithesis: a bishop so involved with his own religious devotion that he not only neglected his political duty

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<sup>14</sup> Hoffmann 35.

<sup>15</sup> Ruotger 40.240.22; cited in Mayr-Harting, “Ruotger,” 36, and Hoffmann, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Hoffmann 31, referring to Liudprand, *Antapodosis* IV.VI-VII and V.XXVI.

<sup>17</sup> *Causantur forte aliqui divine dispensationis ignari, quare epsicopus rem populi et pericula belli tractaverit, cum animarum tantummodo curam susceperit. Quibus res ipsa facile, si quid sanum sapiunt, satisfacit, cum tantum et tam insuetum illis presertim partibus pacis bonum per hunc tutorem et doctorem fidelis populi longe lateque propagatum aspiciunt, ne pro hac re quasi in tenebras amplius, ubi non est presentia lucis, offendant.* Ruotger 23.212.24-30, trans. Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 27.

to receive Otto on an official visit, but gave up on his attempts to mediate with the rebels Liudolf and Conrad and abandoned Mainz to them, casting grave doubts on his loyalty to the king.<sup>18</sup> Although he gave the rebels no overt support, his religious authority carried enough weight that even his tacit approval of the insurgency was a great asset to their cause.<sup>19</sup> To this, Ruotger placed the following stinging rebuke in Otto's mouth:

Some perverse men will perchance say that... battles are none of your business; they do not become the dignity of your ministry. With such words of strident falsity you see how many the metropolitan archbishop has... enticed into the madness of civil disorder. If he wanted to desert from... the danger of battle, in order to pass his time in religious leisure, it would have been better for us indeed and for our *res publica*, to have handed over to us what we conferred on him by our royal munificence, rather than to our enemies.<sup>20</sup>

One basis of Ruotger's case against the archbishop of Mainz is a philosophy derived from the gospel of John, to wit: "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep; the hireling (*mercennarius*) and he that is not the shepherd... sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep; the hireling flees because he is a hireling."<sup>21</sup> Frederick in this context was obviously the *mercennarius* who fled before the wolves, where Brun, the *bonus pastor*,

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<sup>18</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 28.

<sup>19</sup> Hoffmann 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Dicent fortasse bellis hec sedanda esse, que ad te non pertineant, que tui ministerii dignitatem non deceant. Huiusmodi fraudulenta verborum iactantia istius metropolis presul, vides, quantos seduxit, quantos ad civilis cladis rabiem illexit; qui si subducere vellet a dissensione, quemadmodum fingit, et bellorum periculo, ut religioso degere posset in otio, nobis profecto et nostre rei publice melius id, quod ei regali munificencia contulimus, reddidisset quam hostibus.* Ruotger 20.206, 28-33, trans. Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 29.

<sup>21</sup> *11 Bonus pastor animam suam dat per ovibus suis; 12 Mercennarius autem, et qui non est pastor... videt lumpum venientem et dimittit oves; 13 mercennarius fugit autem, quia est mercennarius.* John 10:11-13, cited in Hoffman, 39.



was prepared to risk death—particularly on the battlefield—in order to protect his flock.<sup>22</sup> This seems to be a declaration by Ruotger that for a bishop to neglect his temporal obligations to the king and the Reich in favor of a saintly but entirely pacific lifestyle was not only worthy of contempt, but also tantamount to treason.

The lengthy speech that Ruotger attributed to Otto in chapter 20 was designed not only to scorn Frederick, but also to emphasize significant points of Brun's position. While the king authorized his brother to use all necessary means, including armed force, to pacify Lotharingia, he was not there merely to sign Brun's permission slip to go fight. The entire passage is permeated by the idea of unity between the two brothers,<sup>23</sup> and shows that the archbishop shared in the sacral qualities of Otto's bloodline as a "royal priest" (*regale sacerdotium*).<sup>24</sup> It essentially implies that Brun was equally qualified to be king. This was a unique defense that no other bishop of the Ottonian period could claim, and was in keeping with the singularity of Brun's dual title. Another tactic Ruotger used that seems to appear in no other work was a discussion of contemporary popular opinion of Brun and the archbishop's indifference to his critics, which was couched as a sign of his modesty and resistance to earthly fame.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hoffmann 38.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>24</sup> Ruotger 20.206.18.

<sup>25</sup> Hoffmann 42.

Ruotger's audience would have included many of Brun's followers and appointees to bishoprics within Lotharingia, so he was preaching to the choir to some extent while trying on the whole to impress on the Lotharingian church the need for a new kind of soldier/scholar/pastoral bishop.<sup>26</sup> He related his patron's support of the liberal arts as an important component of sacral kingship and as intellectual training for a bishop's administrative duties and made the arts out to be spiritual weapons to be used in defense of the king and the Reich.<sup>27</sup> While Ruotger made no mention of Brun participating in battle with actual weapons, Mayr-Harting contends that Brun's devotion to the *bonae artes* must have included a study of the military as well as the liberal arts, borne out by a later reference by Thietmar of Merseburg to Brun as a military teacher as well as a leader.<sup>28</sup> Brun also dedicated a copy of a military manual, the *Strategmata* of Frontinus, to his brother.<sup>29</sup> Yet these aspects are equally balanced by his spiritual achievements. Ruotger drew attention to the advice Brun gives Otto on the choosing of candidates for other bishoprics, emphasizing that he "...especially [preferred] those who would never be ignorant of what the pastoral office was."<sup>30</sup> This meant that Brun still thought of a bishop as a caretaker of souls above all, regardless of the weight of his secular duties. Although

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<sup>26</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 19.

<sup>27</sup> Hoffmann 51.

<sup>28</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg *Chronicon* IV.31.

<sup>29</sup> Hoffmann 52.

<sup>30</sup> ...illos nimirum ceteris preferens, quibus nequaquam esset ingonitum, quid pastoris esset officium... Ruotger 37.236.21-22, trans. Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 12.

Ruotger declared that the grace of God at his patron's side was enough to let him subdue his enemies at times without bloodshed,<sup>31</sup> his personal sanctity, while impressive, was insufficient to the task of raising enough troops to properly deal with the rebels. Thus, the ducal authority was called for.<sup>32</sup>

In short, Ruotger justified Brun's actions by the ends he achieved. The *Vita Brunonis* not only supported but also glorified Brun's binary position as Archbishop of Cologne and Duke of Lotharingia, pastor and warlord in one. Prinz neatly sums up his policies as those of *pax*, *timor*, and *terror*.<sup>33</sup> His ancestry was touted as having been of the highest nobility "since men could remember,"<sup>34</sup> and his life was held up not as a saint's to inspire piety, but as that of a great nobleman who pursued both secular and sacred duties with equal devotion for the good of the realm (not to say the advancement of his brother's politics). To the extent that the so-called *Reichskirchensystem* existed, Brun appears to have personified it. Yet while he has been seen in retrospect to be the archetype of the Ottonian bishop, and Ruotger's *Vita* a blueprint for those who followed him,<sup>35</sup> it is also worth considering that Ruotger may have been holding Brun of Cologne up as a subject

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<sup>31</sup> ...*ut absque bello et humana pernicie maxima sepe pericula sedarentur*. Ruotger 25.216.14, cited in Hoffmann, 40.

<sup>32</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 29.

<sup>33</sup> Prinz 195.

<sup>34</sup> *Attavorum eius attavi usque ad hominum memoriam omnes nobilissimi...* Ruotger 2.182.20-21.

<sup>35</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 19-20.

of admiration too virtuous to be imitated.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the practice of granting secular titles to bishops would not become the norm until the early eleventh century—and then only with counties, not duchies—and so for his time, Brun was a novelty.<sup>37</sup>

For all his repute as a warlord, Brun of Cologne saw no actual fighting during the most memorable military operation of his brother's reign, the victory over the Magyars at the River Lech in August of 955. He assembled his troops on receiving news of their invasion, but instead of marching south, kept them in reserve against the possibility that the enemy would turn toward Lotharingia and the lower Rhineland.<sup>38</sup> Another man was on the spot for the Lechfeld campaign, a different yet equally apt model—perhaps even a better one—for the “good” Ottonian bishop.

Gerhard of Augsburg, *Vita Sancti Oudalrici Episcopi Augustani*

Udalrich (or Ulrich) of Augsburg was born to a noble family of Swabia, most likely about 890;<sup>39</sup> his own words name his birthplace as Augsburg itself.<sup>40</sup> He began his

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<sup>36</sup> Hoffmann 49.

<sup>37</sup> Reuter, *Germany* 157.

<sup>38</sup> Ruotger 36.232.24-28 and Bowlus, *The Battle of the Lechfeld*, 99 and 106.

<sup>39</sup> Hatto Kallfelz, *Das Leben des heiligen Ulrich Bischofs von Augsburg verfasst von Gerhard (Vita Sancti Oudalrici episcopi Augustani Auctore Gerharo)*, in *Lebensbeschreibungen Einiger Bischöfe des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts*, FSGA 22: 37–167 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 53, fn 5.

<sup>40</sup> Gerhard of Augsburg *Vita Sancti Oudalrici Episcopi Augustani*, ed. Kallfelz, 1.56.12-13.

clerical career as a child *oblate* at the monastery of St-Gall. He then entered the service of Bishop Adalbert of Augsburg, advanced to the court of Henry I, and was elevated to the see of his native city in 923.<sup>41</sup> He held his office for a respectable 50 years, during which his piety generated tales of miracles. The most well known is how he rode across the swollen river Wertach in winter and emerged entirely dry, while a companion was soaked to the waist.<sup>42</sup> Gerhard, provost of the cathedral chapter, wrote the *Vita Sancti Uodalrici* as part of an effort to have him canonized, and so it counts as the type of saint's *vita* that the *Vita Brunonis* was not. He probably began it shortly after the bishop's death in 973, and it must have been in circulation by 992, as it was read at his canonization.<sup>43</sup>

His saintly qualities notwithstanding, Udalrich conducted the military part of his office equally well. The highlight of his martial career was his defense of Augsburg during the Magyar invasion of 955. Chapter 12 of the *Vita* narrates the local course of events at some length, up to and including the Battle of the Lechfeld as seen from within Augsburg's walls, undoubtedly drawn from Gerhard's own memory as well as living eyewitnesses.<sup>44</sup> However, this clash was by no means Bishop Udalrich's first outing as a military leader. He had previously served Otto I during the rebellion of the king's son

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<sup>41</sup> Gerhard 1.53-56 passim.

<sup>42</sup> Gerhard 17.120.32-122.9.

<sup>43</sup> Kallfelz, introduction to *Das Leben des Ulrich*, 38.

<sup>44</sup> Bowlus 7.

Liudolf from 953 to 954, and in chapter 10, Gerhard describes in tense and exciting detail the hazards that his loyalty entailed.

In the summer of 953, Duke Henry of Bavaria had marched with his vassals to support his brother the king, leaving his lands in the custody of *Pfalzgraf* Arnulf of Regensburg, who betrayed this trust and delivered Bavaria into Liudolf's hands. Bishop Udalrich, "whose loyalty was so firm that he never refused the king help,"<sup>45</sup> mustered a portion of his own followers and went to assist Otto in restoring his brother to power. Due to the urgency of his mission, he travelled "not in a cart, but by horse."<sup>46</sup> This is a seemingly tongue-in-cheek reference to the bishop's habit of going about his lands in an ox-drawn vehicle, the better to conduct business or read the psalms during his "commute."<sup>47</sup> Once he had left, Arnulf's troops looted Augsburg, captured many of the bishop's men, and left the surrounding territory to Liudolf's followers. When Udalrich returned from campaign, he found his remaining vassals in dire circumstances and saw that his reduced forces were outnumbered by the enemies around them. He decided to leave Augsburg for the nearby fortress of Matahinga, which was "lacking all structures... and completely abandoned,"<sup>48</sup> to make his stand as best he could.

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<sup>45</sup> ...*Oudalricus, cuius fidelitas firma stabilitas numquam ab adiutorio regis separata est...* Gerhard 10.96.15-16.

<sup>46</sup> ...*omisso vehiculo carpenti, equitando...* Gerhard 10.96.18.

<sup>47</sup> Gerhard 5.76.34-36.

<sup>48</sup> ...*quod erat in toto interius exteriusque sine aedificiis desertum.* Gerhard 10.96.35-98.1.

Arnulf delivered threats; Udalrich negotiated and prevaricated, cleverly stalling for time to allow him to reinforce his position. When he felt suitably prepared, he dropped his pretense and declared openly that he would not desert Otto's cause. Arnulf's son, named for his father, gathered an army and prepared to dislodge the bishop. Udalrich offered a hefty monetary bribe in exchange for peace, but coupled it with the threat of excommunication for all those who violated the property of the Virgin Mary, Augsburg's patron. Undeterred, the younger Arnulf laid siege to Matahinga "on the Sunday which the clergy keep as the last day to eat meat before Easter."<sup>49</sup> The bishop hunkered down and put his faith in God. He was rewarded shortly when his brother, Count Dietbald of Brenzgau, along with Count Adelbert of Obermachtal—seemingly the king's only remaining partisans in Swabia<sup>50</sup>—marched to his aid. They launched a surprise attack on the rebels' siege camp "at dawn on the first day of Lent, which is a Monday."<sup>51</sup> The younger Arnulf and his followers were routed; "None of those who had showed hostility in Augsburg to God's holy mother Mary came away unscathed, save those that had immediately bought with their own means the indulgence of the reverend bishop."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *...in qua mos est clericorum ante quadragesimam carnes manducare et deinceps usque ad sanctum tempus paschae devitare...* Gerhard 10.98.31-32. Kallfelz puts the date at 5 February 954.

<sup>50</sup> Gerhard 10.98.9-11.

<sup>51</sup> *...prima die quadragesimalis temporis, quod est dies Lunae...* Gerhard 10.100.1-3.

<sup>52</sup> *Nullus enim eorum, qui antea sibi spolia Augustae civitatis in contrarietatem sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae vendicaverunt, impunitis evasit, nisi qui se suis propriis rebus cum indulgentia reverendi episcopi redimere non distulerunt.* Gerhard 10.100.18-22.

This passage offers a thorough picture not only of an Ottonian bishop's duties, but of the way in which kinship and interpersonal loyalty underlay the working of German politics and internal strife. Gerhard showcased Udalrich's considerable leadership skills under duress, his ability to read the strengths and weaknesses of his own forces and those of his opponents, and his way of striking a balance between diplomacy, tactical maneuver, and faith (in both God and the bonds of blood and *amicitiae* that assured his allies' support). It is also worth noting that Udalrich relied on his city's patron saint as a prop to the righteousness of his position and as an added weight to the threats he made to his opponents, an approach which did not feature prominently in other bishops' *vitae*. In his study of the Lechfeld campaign, Charles Bowlus has observed that Gerhard may have played down the bishop's role in military violence in order to smooth over his candidacy for sainthood.<sup>53</sup> There is evidence here, however, to suggest that Gerhard's intention was quite the opposite. The attention he drew to the dates of the incident, with implied criticism of the rebels who launched an attack during Holy Week, rings like legal testimony, as if to say, "Let the record reflect that my bishop was here on these days and did these things." By showing how Udalrich succeeded as both a loyal vassal of the king and a defender of his diocese and of the honor of Saint Mary, Gerhard seems to offer a picture of the bishop as a holy warrior who used all the canonical weapons in his arsenal, stopping short of actually bearing arms or doing violence in person. This image is drawn even more obviously during his later actions, as it seemed that Udalrich's experiences

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<sup>53</sup> Bowlus 7.



during the rebellion were a dress rehearsal of sorts for the challenges that lay ahead.

Gerhard was also careful to show the consequences of the sins perpetrated upon the bishop and his city, by both the highborn and the low, whether repented for or not. “Not long after, *pfalzgraf* Arnulf, who had presumed to invade the property of Saint Mary with hostility, and remained incorrigibly impenitent, was at the seige of Regensburg; and as he left the city to fight, was killed in the tumult.”<sup>54</sup> For contrast, the passage then introduces an anonymous soldier who was tormented by the devil for looting a cheap tablecloth from Augsburg, but was relieved of his guilt when he returned his plunder and confessed to the bishop. Lest the reader doubt that the narrative of events was second to the advancement of Christian morality through the deeds of Udalrich, Gerhard states:

So that I do not digress too long from my subject, let me refrain from enumerating the sieges of cities by one party or the other, or the raging battles everywhere and the vicissitudes of various raids; and speak rather of Almighty God through the merits of His servants graciously freed the people, so they might not through the machinations of the devil be brought to ruin.<sup>55</sup>

Along with the bishop of Chur, Udalrich mediated a peace between Otto and Liudolf in 954, “and one hoped for a time of peace and quiet. Yet in the following year, the year of the incarnation of our lord Jesus Christ 955, the horde of the Hungarians broke upon

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<sup>54</sup> Gerhard 11.102.4-8

<sup>55</sup> *Ne diu me ab incepta taxatione subtraham, libet stilum retrahere ab enumeratione ex utraque parte obsessarum urbium et bellorum undique furentium et vicissitudine stromatum diversorum; sed potius, quomodo Dominus omnipotens per merita servorum suorum suum dignaretur populum liberare, libet recensere, ne diaboli machinationibus ad suum perveniret exitium.* Gerhard 12.102.17-22.

us.”<sup>56</sup> After ravaging Bavaria, the Magyars crossed the Lech and pillaged Swabia, then invested Augsburg, whose walls had not yet been fully repaired from the damage sustained during the rebellion. However:

...the saintly bishop had brought together within the bulwarks of the city a large number of the best soldiers, whose training and bravery ensured that the city would be properly defended under God. When they saw that the Hungarian army had completely surrounded the city, they wanted to sally out against it, which the bishop did not permit them to do. Instead, he ordered that the gate through which entry was the easiest be heavily reinforced. The bishop's soldiers, fighting valiantly in front of [the east] gate, resisted [the Hungarians]... During the battle the bishop sat on his warhorse and remained unwounded in the midst of the fray while wearing only a *stola*, protected by neither shield nor chain mail, nor helmet, as missiles and stones whirled around him. After this encounter, he re-entered the city, and, walking around it, he ordered that blockhouses be constructed throughout the entire night at suitable places and that the walls be reinforced whenever time allowed. He, however, spent the night in prayer.<sup>57</sup>

Charles Bowlus suggests that the bishop's passage through the fray, unarmored yet unharmed, may not have been all that miraculous due to the probable inaccuracy of

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<sup>56</sup> ...se aliquod spacium temporis in pace posse quiescere. Altero pro certo statim anno, quod est anno incarnationis domini nostri Iesu Christi 955, tanta multitudo Ungrorum erupit... Gerhard 12.104.5-7.

<sup>57</sup> Sanctus autem antistes magnam valde multitudinem optimorum militum secum intra septa civitatis collocatam habebat, ex quorum agilitate et audacia civitas fortiter firmata Deo iuvante consistebat. Qui ut exercitum Ungrorum ad expugnandam civitatem circumdare viderunt, eis obviam exire voluerunt. Sed hoc episcopus eis non consentiens, portam, ubi maximus aditus intrandi manebat, firmiter obcludere praecipit. ... Milites episcopi ante portam viriliter pugnantes, eis resistebant... Hora vero belli episcopus super caballum suum sedens, stola indutus, non clipeo aut lorica aut galea munitus, iaculis et lapidibus undique circa eum discurrentibus, intactus et inlaesus subsistebat. Bello vero finito regrediens, circuivit civitatem, et domos belli in circuitu civitatis congruenter ponere, et in tota nocte eas aedificare, et vallos, quantum tempus suppetebat, renovare praecipit. Ille autem totum spatium noctis in oratione pernoctans... Gerhard 12.104.16-105.2; trans. Bowlus, 176-7.

Magyar archery at close range.<sup>58</sup> Regardless, this is a powerful account. It describes the elderly Udalrich making the most of his position to lead from the front, inspiring his troops at great personal risk, showing clearly that he had full control over his *milites*, and had taken the experience of the siege of Matahinga to heart. Most importantly, it demonstrates Gerhard's belief that a would-be saint could very properly lead troops in a military action, and do so protected only by his faith, without impugning his sanctity.

Udalrich's heroism at Augsburg delayed the Magyars long enough for Otto to arrive with his army and lift the siege, upon which the Swabian contingent in the royal host were reinforced by Udalrich's best troops, led by his brother Dietpald. Udalrich himself did not join Otto's army, but following the king's decisive victory, emerged from his battered city to search for his brother's body among the slain. Thanks to his contribution to this triumph of militant Christendom, as well as the miracles attributed to him during his lifetime and posthumously, Udalrich was made a saint by Pope John XV in 993, the first ever to be formally canonized by Rome.<sup>59</sup> As a patron of the Ottonian house, his image appeared prominently in the iconography of Henry II.<sup>60</sup> Brun of Cologne, in spite of the devotion of his own local cult, was not granted sainthood until 1895.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Bowlus 103.

<sup>59</sup> Heer, *The Holy Roman Empire* 33.

<sup>60</sup> Bowlus 2.

<sup>61</sup> Mayr-Harting 17.

## 12. WITNESS TO WAR: THIETMAR

Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*

The first two books of the Thietmar's chronicle have been called little more than a condensation of Widukind with the benefit of a certain amount of editing.<sup>1</sup> This is not an unfair assessment, yet the *Chronicon* is much more than the sum of its parts. Born into a noble East Saxon family in 975 and elevated in 1009 to the revived archbishopric of Merseburg,<sup>2</sup> Thietmar compiled his history between 1013 and his death in 1018. It covers the period from 892 to Thietmar's death, from the reign of Henry I into the time of Henry II, whom Thietmar served. Possibly drawing on the *Vita Brunonis* and the *Vita Sancti Oudalrici* as well as the *Res gestae Saxonicae*, Thietmar provided a narrative that touched on the careers of numerous important churchmen, not the least of whom is himself. Merseburg was an important staging point for the Polish and Bohemian campaigns of Henry II and Thietmar was both an eyewitness and an active participant in these.<sup>3</sup> Thietmar's point of view remained that of a dyed-in-the-wool Saxon aristocrat, a political animal, and a devoted administrator of his see and his spiritual duties all at once, loyal to both Reich and Church. His narrative reflects a skillful balancing act between

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<sup>1</sup> Raymund F. Wood, *The Three Books of the Deeds of the Saxons*, Ph.D. diss. (University of California at Los Angeles, 1949), 67.

<sup>2</sup> Merseburg was established in 968 by Otto I (see fn 29 below), but suppressed for various reasons of jurisdiction in 981 by Otto II. Henry II restored the bishopric in 1004. David A. Warner, introduction to *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, 59.

<sup>3</sup> David S. Bachrach, "Memory, Epistemology, and the Writing of Early Medieval History: The Example of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg (1009-1018)" (*Viator* 38, No.1 [2007]), 73.

contemporary standards for the ideal behavior for a bishop and that which the political and military reality of the “*Reichskirchensystem*” required.

Thietmar’s attitude towards war reflected the theory that Ottonian society was not just militaristic, but indeed organized by war. As with Widukind and Ruotger, warfare to Thietmar was an acceptable and normal aspect of kingly rule as ordained by God. He saw the act of participating in war, whether sanctioned by the crown or in a “just” private feud, as both a nobleman’s duty and his privilege, whether he held a secular title or a church benefice. Thietmar was unapologetically proud of his own East Saxon lineage and his immediate family. He spoke of the martial prowess of his ancestors,<sup>4</sup> of his father’s heroism even in unauthorized warfare,<sup>5</sup> of his brother’s exploits on campaign against Boleslav,<sup>6</sup> and of his uncles’ exciting escape from the clutches of the Norsemen and his own narrow brush with being held as an official hostage himself.<sup>7</sup> His cousin Werner, even as a rebel, was given his due in a tale of his vigorous warlike qualities.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Emperor’s right to make war on pagans and “bad Christians” was unquestioned, Thietmar easily portrayed his patron Henry II and his forbears as successful military leaders. Henry I, even as a youth, “revealed himself to be a warrior of

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<sup>4</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg I.10.16.4-7 and VI.48.334.20-22.

<sup>5</sup> Thietmar II.29.75.30-32.

<sup>6</sup> Thietmar VI.15.292.21-23.

<sup>7</sup> Thietmar IV.24.159-60.

<sup>8</sup> Thietmar VII.4.403-404.

good character.”<sup>9</sup> Otto I, even though he was “a friend of peace [who] greatly suppressed warfare,”<sup>10</sup> was also called *invincibilis*,<sup>11</sup> an epithet which his crucial victory at the Lech must certainly have warranted to Thietmar’s generation. However, pitched battles were a rare occurrence. The Emperors and their followers most frequently conducted economic warfare, burning and plundering property and causing loss of life to livestock and humans. When the enemies were pagans, they were also subject to enslavement. No phrase seems to have been used more repeatedly than that thus-and-such a leader “laid waste to [an enemy’s territory] by fire and sword.” Thietmar did not explicitly glorify the destruction of land and people, nor did he make an effort to condemn it, at least not so far as it was executed by a king or magnate of his own party conducting a “just” war. In fact, St. Augustine’s teachings seemed to have been interpreted in this period to sanction the legitimate killing of all in war’s path, whether they were of non-combatant status or not.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, war waged by a Christian monarch against the pagan required no such excuse. Henry I destroyed and burned the territory of the Slavs;<sup>13</sup> Otto III did likewise to the rebellious Hevelli.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *...et ut bonae indolis gradatim enituit tiro.* Thietmar I.3.6.5 (trans. Warner, 68).

<sup>10</sup> *Pacis amicus erat bellum lateque premebat.* Thietmar, Prologue to Book II, 37.14 (89).

<sup>11</sup> Thietmar, Prologue to Book II, 38 19.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Allmand, “War and the Noncombatant in the Middle Ages,” in Keen, *Medieval Warfare*, 258.

<sup>13</sup> Thietmar I.3.6.

<sup>14</sup> Thietmar IV.29.167.

Even when conducted against fellow Christians, Thietmar recognized economic war against rebels and other threats to the well being of the empire as appropriate. When Lothar of Francia seized Aachen, Otto II invaded his Christian neighbor in reprisal. Thietmar noted smugly that Otto “pursued him as far as his seat at Paris, wasting and burning everything in his path. The emperor returned in triumph, having struck the enemy with such terror that they never again dared such a thing.”<sup>15</sup> Henry II pillaged the rebel Herman of Swabia’s territory on more than one occasion, but lest his patron appear too little versed in Christian charity, Thietmar said of the second outing that Henry was “conquered by the cries of the poor” and desisted.<sup>16</sup> Following the suppression of an uprising in Pavia in 1004 in which the Empress’s younger brother Giselbert was slain and avenged, Henry restrained his men from excessive looting and granted mercy to those who performed ritual submission.<sup>17</sup> Even against the Bohemians, who were often as much enemies as subjects, Henry found himself disturbed by the massacre of the garrison at Saaz by its citizens in order to gain his favor and granted protection to the survivors.<sup>18</sup>

Like Widukind, Thietmar reserved his criticism for rebels and foreign enemies of Germany, especially pagan ones. Even when they were using the same tactics as the

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<sup>15</sup> *Quem celeriter abeuntem cesar insequitur, depopulatis omnibus et incendio consumptis usque ad Parisiam sedem. Reversus inde imperator triumphali gloria, tantum hostibus incussit terrorem, ut numquam post talia incipere auderent.* Thietmar III.8.107.7-8,11-13 (133).

<sup>16</sup> *...ad ultimum clamore devictus pauperum...* Thietmar V.13.236.11(214).

<sup>17</sup> Thietmar VI.8.283.35-284.5.

<sup>18</sup> Thietmar VI.11.288.1-6.

German forces, the language Thietmar used to describe them is subtly harsher, sometimes applied to the actions and sometimes to the perpetrators. In putting down the rebellion of his son Liudolf in 954, Otto I left Bavarian territory “depopulated and ravaged by fire.”<sup>19</sup> On the other side of the coin, the adherents of Otto’s brother Henry during a later rebellion were “supporters of... iniquity” when they behaved in like fashion.<sup>20</sup> The pagans who rebelled and sacked Brandenburg in 983 are condemned for committing an outrage, even though they seemed to be instruments of God’s anger against the arrogance of Margrave Dietrich.<sup>21</sup> Yet for this strong language, these statements are curiously bloodless and do not touch on the actual suffering of war’s collateral victims. It seems as though Thietmar, so long as he was satisfied that the war was “just,” was more concerned with the dignity of the Church and the prerogatives of the aristocracy than he was in the destruction of the lives and livelihood of the people of the land. When the clergy were mocked (exactly how is unclear) during Otto II’s attack on Schleswig in 974 during the suppression of the rebellious Danes, it seems to have instilled more indignation in Thietmar than in any case of a city actually being sacked.<sup>22</sup> Thietmar also expressed his disapproval for Henry II’s alliance with the pagan Liutizi in his wars against Boleslav Chrobry. Without criticizing Henry directly in so many words, his disdain was implied

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<sup>19</sup> ...*eadem regione depopulata atque combusta rediit*. Thietmar II.6.46.6-7 (96).

<sup>20</sup> ...*cum caeteris nequiciae suimet fautoribus cis Renum plurima depopulati sunt*. Thietmar II.34.82.4-5 (117).

<sup>21</sup> Thietmar III.17.119-20.

<sup>22</sup> Thietmar III.6.104.3-11.



when he went on for some three chapters describing the Slavs' barbaric customs.<sup>23</sup> Yet when Henry's Slavic allies pillaged the lands of the rebel bishop Dietrich of Metz, Thietmar lay the blame squarely on Dietrich himself, who "brought irreparable harm upon himself and his successors."<sup>24</sup>

Though his commitment to the Church and the Christian faith were unwavering, Thietmar, like Widukind, did not often couch his descriptions of warfare in theological terms. War for the Germans as he described it, though waged on behalf of God's anointed monarch, was a matter of worldly power politics as often as it was a righteous struggle in the name of God. Christian doctrine and ritual were usually incidental to its conduct. Defeat was sometimes seen by Thietmar as God's punishment for sin and sometimes simply as the fortunes of war; victory was occasionally the result of divine favor, but more often the credit went to the earthly combatants. Those instances in which he described God's influence (whether direct or indirect) seem to occur in battle against enemies of the faith, not fellow Christians. Thietmar noted that Henry I converted the Danes by force and stamped out their practice of human sacrifice, as was proper for a Christian monarch, citing God's prohibition against killing the innocent and pious.<sup>25</sup> This is a supreme irony considering the number of innocents who were undoubtedly harmed during all the looting and burning that came as the collateral to "just" war. Henry was

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<sup>23</sup> Thietmar VI.22.301-25.304 passim.

<sup>24</sup> *...sibi successoribusque suis inexistimabile detrimentum promeruit.* Thietmar VI.51.338.13-14 (273).

<sup>25</sup> Thietmar I.17.23-24.

penitent when God humbles him in battle for his pride,<sup>26</sup> but as to whether he had a profit motive, Thietmar the nobleman prudently absolved himself from judging: “If, as many say, Henry enriched himself unjustly during his reign, may merciful God forgive him.”<sup>27</sup> The epic qualities of the battle at the Lech in 955 and the conditions that led up to it naturally called for divine participation, especially given the fortuitous timing that saw the main day of battle occur on the Feast of St. Lawrence. He saw the Magyar invasion of the previous year as God’s punishment, which the Almighty only lifted when the cries of the sinners became too great.<sup>28</sup> When Otto addressed his troops at Augsburg prior to leading them into battle, he issued a crusading-style promise of eternal reward for those who died fighting the pagans. Promising to dedicate a bishopric at Merseburg in exchange for God’s help, Otto then led them with the Holy Lance in his hand.<sup>29</sup>

During the wars of Otto II against the Bohemians, the enemy sacked the church at Zeitz and the monastery of Calbe, because, according to Theitmar, they believed strongly in their pagan gods while “our spirits [were] fearful because of our sins.”<sup>30</sup> In the same passage, when the Abodrites burned Hamburg, God intervened directly in view of all to

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<sup>26</sup> Thietmar I.15.22.

<sup>27</sup> *Si quid in regno suimet, ut multi dicunt, predatus sit, huic Deus Clemens ignoscat.* Thietmar I.16.23.21-22 (80).

<sup>28</sup> Thietmar II.7.47.

<sup>29</sup> Thietmar II.10.48. Otto was unable to fulfill his promise until 968.

<sup>30</sup> *...nostra etenim facinora nobis formidinem et his suggerebant validam mentem.* Thietmar III.18.120.8-9 (142).

save the city's holy relics: "A golden hand came down from the highest regions and, with outstretched fingers, reached into the middle of the fire."<sup>31</sup> In the following campaign, the Slavs ravaged "without sustaining any losses and aided by their gods,"<sup>32</sup> this is a curious turn of phrase that almost seems to give credence to the pagans' religion. The German forces under several noblemen (including Thietmar's father Siegfried) and two bishops, after "fortifying body and spirit with the sacrament of Heaven,"<sup>33</sup> then dealt the pagans a stunning defeat. Thietmar ascribed their loss to their abandonment by God for their unbelief. The very next passage offers a contrast. When Otto II suffered his military disaster in Calabria in 982 against the Saracens, the "innumerable" fallen had "names... known only to God"<sup>34</sup> (which was to say, the "other ranks," as he identifies several nobles by name). Yet Thietmar makes no mention of the defeat as a punishment for sin, nor of the error of the enemy's religion.

Notwithstanding the seeming inconsistency in how he portrayed divine influence on the motivation and outcome of Christians waging war, Thietmar was clearly comfortable with the participation of churchmen (himself included) in the same, directly or indirectly. The *Chronicon* contains numerous mentions of bishops and abbots being called upon to

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<sup>31</sup> *Venit de supernis sedibus aurea dextera, in medium collapsa incendium expansis digitis, et plena cunctis videntibus rediit.* Thietmar III.18.120.13-15 (142).

<sup>32</sup> *...quae sine aliqua lesione residua quaeque suorum auxilio deorum tunc devastare non dubitarent...* Thietmar III.19.120.26-27. (142).

<sup>33</sup> *...corpus animamque caelesti sacramento muniunt...* Thietmar III.19.122.3-4 (143).

<sup>34</sup> *... ceterisque ineffabilibus, quorum nomina Deus sciat.* Thietmar III.20.124.6 (144).

provide troops for garrison duty in frontier fortresses and to defend their own bailiwicks against enemies of the state;<sup>35</sup> to serve as jailors for important political prisoners;<sup>36</sup> and, of course, to not only provide, but command, contingents of troops for the Emperor's campaigns against both foreign enemies and rebels. Curiously, Brun of Cologne, who featured so prominently in the military-political landscape of Otto the Great's reign, is described at length by Thietmar only once, when he intrigued with Hugh of West Francia to betray the king his brother (an incident discreetly overlooked by writers at the time). Thietmar did, however, report Brun's subsequent repentance and reconciliation. On the subject of his dual role, he said only, "I have spoken of only a few of this great man's innumerable deeds... because his noble lifestyle is fully described in another book [Ruotger's *Vita Brunonis*], to which I can add nothing."<sup>37</sup> Another notable omission from Thietmar's catalogue was the central role played by Udalrich of Augsburg during the Lech campaign. This is an odd discrepancy, if, as Warner thinks, he had the *Vita Sancti Uodalrici* to draw on.<sup>38</sup> Thietmar himself, however, clearly knew what it took to conduct the defense of a city. Assigned to garrison an old burg near Lebusa, he showed off both his strategic acumen and his classical education: "I surveyed it with great

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<sup>35</sup> Thietmar V.21.247.3-5 and V.25.251.4-6.

<sup>36</sup> Thietmar VI.54.342.10-11.

<sup>37</sup> *Pauca locutus sum de innumerabilibus et isto et isto melioribus tanti viri ingenuis actibus, quia liber unus de eius nobili conversatione pleniter inscriptus me aliquid prohibet addere.* Thietmar II.23.69.6-9 (109).

<sup>38</sup> David Warner, "Thietmar of Merseburg: The Image of the Ottonian Bishop," in *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millenium*, ed. Michael Frassetto, 85-110 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 86-87. Widukind overlooked Udalrich likewise.

diligence and decided, on the authority of Lucan, that it was a large Roman structure and the work of Julius Caesar. It could have held more than ten thousand men.”<sup>39</sup>

The following examples are worth noting, as they demonstrate the conflict that sometimes seemed to be inherent in calling upon spiritual leaders to perform acts of destructive warfare. In 1003, Henry II sent Bishop Henry of Würzburg and Abbot Erkenbald of Fulda to destroy Schweinfurt to punish its rebel lord, the Margrave Henry. When Henry’s agitated mother refused to leave, the two churchmen “...[put] aside secular concerns in favor of the love of Christ,” and instead did only token damage.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Bishops Arnulf of Halberstadt and Meinwerk of Paderborn, among others, were ordered by Henry II to pillage Polish territory during his expedition against Boleslav Chrobry in 1010: “And so it was done,”<sup>41</sup> without elaboration. Archbishop Gero of Magdeburg was co-commander of Henry’s rearguard towards the close of the Polish campaign of 1015. His force suffered heavy casualties and while he himself managed to escape, he found himself in the melancholy position of having to officiate at the funerals of some of his fellow nobles who did not.<sup>42</sup> Archbishop Tagino of Merseburg, who sponsored Thietmar to succeed him in his see, commanded a force

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<sup>39</sup> *Hanc cum diligenter lustrarem, opus Iulii Cesaris et magnam Romanorum structuram Lucano ammonente tractavi; haec plus quam X milia hominum capere potuisset.* Thietmar VI.59.348.1-2 (278).

<sup>40</sup> *Unde seniores prefati ob Christi amorem seculares postponendo timores decretam mutabant sententiam...* Thietmar V.38.264.10-12 (231).

<sup>41</sup> *Sic ergo, ut decreverunt, factum est.* Thietmar VI.57.345.27 (277).

<sup>42</sup> Thietmar VII.21.432-22.424

against Boleslav during the fighting of 1007. Thietmar, who was by his side on this campaign, in fact criticizes his superior because he “knew about everything ahead of time, but he had not made sufficient preparations.”<sup>43</sup> Yet he later praises Tagino as a *pior pastore*<sup>44</sup> and describes his devotion to his spiritual duties at length.<sup>45</sup> While it seems as though Thietmar appreciated military competence in his brother bishops, he clearly did not consider it a prerequisite for suitability to pastoral duties.

The most memorable instances of ecclesiastical magnates participating in warfare, of course, were those in which they were not only nominally in charge of a body of men but were involved in the thick of combat themselves. While this may be implied by the number of times a bishop or abbot is cited as the leader of a military unit, unambiguous descriptions of these men putting themselves directly in harm's way are rare. The unarmed leadership showed by Udalrich in the defense of Augsburg is a good example, as is the case of Bernward of Hildesheim during the Roman uprising against Otto III.<sup>46</sup> Thietmar described a similar action during the fight against the Slavs at Bardengau in 997: “Bishop Ramward of Minden took part in that battle. Followed by the standard-bearers, he had taken up his cross in his hands and ridden out ahead of his companions,

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<sup>43</sup> ...*et haec omnia prius sciens, non bene providebat*. Thietmar VI.33.260.22 (260).

<sup>44</sup> Thietmar VI.38.321.18.

<sup>45</sup> Thietmar VI.63.352-65.356 passim.

<sup>46</sup> Thangmar, *Vita Sancti Bernwardi* 24.

thereby encouraging them for battle.”<sup>47</sup> In none of these cases was a churchman depicted actually fighting. That distinction goes to Bishop Michael of Regensburg (941-72) in the aftermath of a defeat on the Hungarian frontier. The passage is vivid and evocative:

The bishop lost an ear, was also wounded in his other limbs, and lay among the fallen as if he were dead. Lying next to him was an enemy warrior. When he realized the bishop alone was alive, and feeling safe from the snares of the enemy, he took a lance and tried to kill him. Strengthened by the Lord, the bishop emerged victorious from the long, difficult struggle and killed his enemy. Finally, travelling by various rough paths, he arrived safely in familiar territory, to the great joy of his flock and all Christians. He was held to be a brave warrior by all the clergy and the best of pastors by the people, and his mutilation brought him no shame, but rather greater honour.<sup>48</sup>

This vignette has frequently been cited as proof positive of the martial nature of Ottonian bishops<sup>49</sup> and seems to demonstrate Thietmar’s skillful ability in his narrative to balance the normal behavior expected of a lord of the Church with canonically suspect deviations from that norm.<sup>50</sup> However, it should be noted that Thietmar *never specifically said that Bishop Michael went into the battle armed with the intention of fighting and killing the*

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<sup>47</sup> *In illo certamine Ramwardus Mindensis episcopus fuit, qui socios, arrepta in manibus cruce sua, sequentibus signiferis precessit et ad hec facienda potenter consolidavit.* Thietmar IV.29.167.12-151 (172).

<sup>48</sup> *Episcopus autem, abscisa suimet auricula et caeteris sauciatus membris, cum interfectis quasi mortuus latuit. Iuxta quem inimicus homo iacens et hunc vivere solum ab insidiantium laqueis tunc securus cernens, hastam sumpsit et necare eundem conatus est. Tunc iste confortatus in Domino post longum mutui agonis luctamen victor hostem prostravit et inter multas itineris asperitates incolomis notos pervenit ad fines. Inde gaudium gregi suo exoritur et omni Christum cognoscenti. Excipitur ab omnibus miles bonus in clero et servatur optimus pastor in populo, et fuit eiusdem mutilatio non ad dedecus, sed ad honorem magis.* Thietmar II.27.72.19-30 (112).

<sup>49</sup> Warner, “Image” 87; D. Bachrach, “Memory” 80-81; Leyser, “Moral Debate” 197.

<sup>50</sup> Warner, *ibid.*

*enemy*, only that he slew a Magyar soldier in self-defense. Perhaps it was by his own sword, perhaps he picked up a weapon lying near to hand, or, for all we know, he may have resisted his opponent so vigorously that he succumbed to existing wounds. The result may have met with approbation, but the circumstances are ambiguous.

Yet as the *Chronicon* moved into the time of Thietmar's own career under Henry II, one gets the sense that he became more introspective and critical of the participation of a churchman in combat. It is not surprising that the enthusiasm for warfare in his voice waned with his own increasing proximity to the consequences of the violence of even a "just" war. In 1009, Henry II instituted a scorched-earth policy on the east Saxon march to deny the Poles its resources. Thietmar expresses guilt over his participation:

I also cannot omit the great misfortune that befell the margrave. All of us—and I exclude no one—acted as though we were Gero's enemies rather than his friends. With the sole exception of his dependants, we destroyed everything, much of it by fire. The king did not seek revenge for this offense, nor did he offer protection.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise lamenting the losses sustained by the troops of Archbishop Gero of Magdeburg in the campaign of 1015 (above), he put forth an especially heartfelt *mea culpa*: "May omnipotent God look upon their names and their souls with mercy! May all of us who

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<sup>51</sup> *Nec preterire possum, quod miserabile nimis predicto comiti ibidem accidit. Nos omnes—nec aliquem excipere valeo—vice amicorum hostes huic fuimus exceptisque dumtaxat mancipiis omnia consumpsimus et quaedam igne. Huius rei nec rex ultor seu defensor fuit.* Thietmar VI.56. 344.8-13 (276).



caused their deaths, through our sins, be reconciled to him through Christ! And, may God mercifully protect us so that we never need to endure such a thing again!”<sup>52</sup>

Still, what good soldier who has seen much slaughter may not regret his actions and still believe in the righteousness of his cause? It has been supposed that the onset of Gregorian Reform in the later eleventh century brought the days of fighting bishops to an end,<sup>53</sup> and to a certain extent this statement is true, though just how true must be the subject of a different study. Thietmar could not have foreseen how the Investiture Conflict between the papacy and the Salian emperors, who succeeded the Ottonians, would change the political landscape of Germany. He could well have believed that “...the strained but successful collaboration of kings and bishops would endure forever and that future generations of bishops might, under the proper circumstances, strap on their armor, take up their swords, and confront the enemies of Christ.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *...quorum nomina et animas Deus omnipotens misericorditer respiciat. Nos vero, quorum peccatis hii oppeciare, sibi per Christum reconciliet et, ne quid tale ulterius paciamur, clemens custodiat.* Thietmar VII.21.423.24-27 (321).

<sup>53</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos* 26.

<sup>54</sup> Warner, “Image” 101.

## 13. FAITHFUL SHEPHERDS: BURCHARD AND BERNWARD

*Vita Burchardi Episcopi*

Burchard served as bishop of Worms from 1000 until his death in 1025. The *Vita Burchardi Episcopi* was written shortly thereafter by a canon of the cathedral chapter who knew him well, possibly the cathedral master Ebbo (or Eberhard), and was most likely dedicated to Burchard's good friend, Walter, bishop of Speyer.<sup>1</sup> While short, the *Vita Burchardi* stands as a reasonably thorough guidebook of sorts to the ecclesiastical, political and military duties of the late Ottonian bishop. Burchard's archiepiscopal career straddled the reigns of Otto III and Henry II, the last of the Ottonian monarchs, and Conrad II, the first of the Salians. His biography therefore gives us a perspective on the politics of dynastic changeover as well as the balancing act between the roles of good Christian shepherd and military commander that befell a bishop of the Mainz circle.

Following the common practice of keeping an ecclesiastical title within the same kin-group, Burchard's brother Franco held the see of Worms before him. This worthy accompanied Otto III on one of his long Italian sojourns as counselor and spiritual confidante, where he was "...zealous in the service of the emperor with a vigilant spirit

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<sup>1</sup> W.L. North, introduction to *The Life of Burchard of Worms, 1025* (*Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, [www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1025burchard-vita.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1025burchard-vita.html)). As Ebbo's authorship is unconfirmed, the *Vita Burchardi* will be treated here as an anonymous work. All quotes that follow are from North's translation, which has no fixed page numbers as an HTML-formatted document.

for more than one year and was often party to his secrets”<sup>2</sup> until his death. There is no indication that Franco had any military responsibilities and his role in the text seems to be to amplify the image of Otto’s self-deprecating piety. Their parents “were not low according to the world’s dignity”<sup>3</sup> and Burchard was apparently a youth of model morals.<sup>4</sup> He entered the orbit of Willigis, the powerful archbishop of Mainz (975-1011), and rose steadily through the clerical ranks to become his right-hand man.<sup>5</sup> After exhibiting the conventional reluctance of the holy man to take on material advancement, he was elevated to his late brother’s bishopric once Otto III returned from Italy in 1000.<sup>6</sup>

Franco’s administrative skills seem to have been less than stellar. Burchard found Worms in a decrepit and depopulated state, its remaining folk living virtually under siege from the depredations of wolves of both the two- and four-footed variety. He set himself at once to seeing his city’s fortifications rebuilt, restoring it to its former peace and security within five years.<sup>7</sup> This description reiterates the shepherd-versus-wolves metaphor of St. John found in Ruotger’s *Vita Brunonis* and speaks to the inherent hazards

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<sup>2</sup> ...in expeditionem Italicam cum imperatore profectus est; ibique plus quam unius anni spacio in servitio imperatoris vigilantissimo animo studebat, eiusque secreti saepe intererat... *Vita Burchardi Episcopi*, ed. G. Waitz (MGH SS IV [Hannover, 1841]) 3.833.30-32.

<sup>3</sup> ...parentibus secundum seculi dignitatem non infimis. *Vita Burchardi* 1.83.1-2.

<sup>4</sup> This is a common trope; the German biographers do not seem to have recorded anyone in the model of Saints Augustine or Francis, who lived sensually as young men and found spiritual enlightenment only later in life.

<sup>5</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 2.833

<sup>6</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 5.834

<sup>7</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 6.835 passim.

of the medieval landscape and the need for urban security. It also recalls the flight of Roman citizens from the *urbs* to the countryside in the wake of the Western Empire's decline and allows Burchard to reprise the role of the bishops of late antiquity who had to defend of their cities as much as they had to tend their flocks.

The theme of the bishop as vigilant guardian against outside predators is universal, but his need to face enemies in his own back yard is not. The greatest impediment to peace in Worms seems to have been a fortified house inside the city held by Duke Otto of Carinthia, a refuge for "robbers, thieves, and all who committed crimes against the bishop... As a consequence, many limbs were hacked off and many murders occurred on both sides."<sup>8</sup> There is no mention of formal military action by Burchard to rid himself of the thorn in his side, but it spurred him to reinforce Worms' walls and build "a very strong fortification [with] towers and structures suitable for fighting,"<sup>9</sup> which enabled him to resist the enemy's hostility and raised the morale of the citizens. The silver lining to this stalemate was that Burchard was somehow able to obtain guardianship of Duke Otto's young grandson Conrad, a virtuous boy rejected by his bellicose family who would grow up to be the future King Conrad II.<sup>10</sup> The issue was finally resolved by the intervention of King Henry II, who negotiated Duke Otto's surrender of his fortified

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<sup>8</sup> *Ad quam domum raptores et fures et omnes contra episcopum delinquentes refugium tutissimum habebant... et ob hoc obtruncationes et homicidia multa ex utraque parte fiebant. Vita Burchardi 7.835.28-31.*

<sup>9</sup> *...et interius, turribus et habitaculis ad pugnandum idoneis non segnitur excitatis, munitionem satis firmam construxit. Vita Burchardi 7.835.42-44.*

<sup>10</sup> *Vita Burchardi 7.835.35-39.*

house as compensation for Burchard's support for his bid for the throne in 1002. The place was promptly demolished and its materials used to raise a monastery on the site.<sup>11</sup>

Such were the challenges facing Burchard simply to put his own house in order, a situation that demonstrates that a bishop might have to deal constantly with martial affairs even without being summoned to march openly to war. Burchard had to contend with the latter duty as well. Before the above matter had been resolved, he had to raise troops for the final Italian expedition of Otto III, and lead them himself alongside men from Mainz and contingents under the abbot of Fulda and the bishop of Würzburg.<sup>12</sup> The incident that follows in the narrative is singular and telling. On hearing of the emperor's death, Burchard's host turned around and headed back to Germany. Blocked by hostile local forces at Lucca, and after failing to negotiate their way through:

“...rising swiftly, our men took up arms and all gathered together. Among them there was a certain Thietmar, a knight of the bishop of Worms and a man of energy and outstanding in all goodness, who was considered to be the best informed person in military matters of the entire army. The bishop summoned him and asked him to help this situation to be resolved without bloodshed, if possible. ... With his men, [Thietmar] swiftly ascended a mountain which was most dangerous to climb... and secretly went behind the enemy force. When they saw our men, the enemy was terrified by their miraculous arrival, were devastated in spirit, and gave themselves over completely to flight. Our men followed, destroying and cutting down in this flight as many as they were able to catch. Greatly troubled by this slaughter, the bishop poured forth tears and rebuked Thietmar severely for this affair. In the end, he sent back not a few *denarii* to the

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<sup>11</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 9.836-7 passim.

<sup>12</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 8.836

citizens as if for compensation. Thus, by God's grace, they returned to the fatherland.”<sup>13</sup>

Burchard was not the only church lord to show regret at the violence of war in which he had participated,<sup>14</sup> but this is a rare and clear-cut expression of guilt in direct reaction to specific incident. Rather than omit the details of battle and focus only on his patron's spiritual achievements, Burchard's biographer chose to show his piety in contrast to the onus of his military duties. Burchard fulfilled his obligation to the emperor's service but could not reconcile himself to the consequences. The modern reader cannot help but feel sympathy for the *miles* Thietmar, who by this report performed his job admirably under difficult conditions only to find himself called on the carpet by a superior who seems to have been in denial about the ramifications of his own orders.

Once the ill-fated attempt by Otto III to recapture the glory of ancient Rome had come to its end, Burchard found himself involved in the politics of succession. Duke Henry of Bavaria secured his backing, and that of the Archbishop of Mainz, to make good his

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<sup>13</sup> *Itaque omnes celeriter consurgentes arma capiunt, et omnes in unum conveniunt. Inter quos erat quidam Thiernarus, miles episcopi Wormaciensis, vir strenuus et omni bonitate praecipuus, qui in hoc exercitu in militari re opinatissimus habebatur. Hunc episcopus ad se vocatum rogavit, ut, si fieri posset, rem istam sine humano sanguine finiri adjuvaret. Qui se eius iussa facturum promittens discessit, convocatisque aliis, quod animo habuit, tacite aperuit. Deinde montem ad ascendendum periculosissimum cum suis maximo labore ac sudore non segnitur ascendit, et inimicam manum clam circumivit. Itaque hostes, visis nostris, et mirabilis eorum adventu perterriti, animo dissoluti sunt, ac praecipites se fugae dederunt. Nostri insequentes, tot in ea fuga peremerunt ac truncaverunt, quot consequi potuerunt. Ex hac caede episcopus conturbatus, lacrimas fudit et Thiernarum multum pro hac re arguit, tandemque non paucos denarios quasi pro expiatione civibus remisit. Itaque Dei gratia adjuvante in patriam reversi sunt. Vita Burchardi 8.836.14-26.*

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Thietmar VI.56 and VII.21.

claim to the throne and become King Henry II. Burchard then had to badger the king at some length to receive his *quid pro quo*: the transfer of Otto of Carinthia's stronghold in Worms to his custody.<sup>15</sup> One sees here that while the king was dependent on loyal bishops for both military service and political influence, fulfillment of the reverse obligation was not always easily forthcoming. There seems to be a bit of lingering resentment in a later encounter, when then-emperor Henry paused in Worms en route to invading Burgundy (possibly in 1016), and the bishop agreed to consecrate a new monastery in Henry's presence only with great reluctance.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps imitating the model of St. Martin, the author describes how Burchard took a retreat from his secular duties to polish off what would become his most well-known accomplishment: the collection of canons known as the *Decretum*, which he completed around 1015.<sup>17</sup> (This virtuous sabbatical may be contrasted with the poorly timed abdication of responsibility on the part of Frederick of Mainz in 939.) When he was not in the mode of dedicated scholar, Burchard often poured his energies into civil as well as military engineering and oversaw the ordering of the human element in his proprietary monasteries as well as the architectural.<sup>18</sup> Even his purely ecclesiastical acts, however, were not necessarily free of the martial theme. When Burchard supervised the enclosing

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<sup>15</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 9.836-7 passim.

<sup>16</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 14.839.

<sup>17</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 10.837 and North fn. 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 16.840.

of a young anchoress, he admonished her fellow nuns in terms that could well be describing Joan of Arc: “Behold, this slip of a girl boldly marches ahead of you with her banner flying high and does not fear to fight against spiritual iniquities. Behold how, dressed in the mail of faith and the helmet of salvation, she is prepared to struggle against the enemy with unflinching spirit.”<sup>19</sup> This language, couching the pursuit of salvation as an armed struggle, harkens back to the writing of Saint Ambrose in its interweaving of military and spiritual thought.

The last few chapters are given over to scriptural analysis and discussion of how piously Burchard met his end, all conventions of typical hagiography. Overall, however, the anonymous *Vita Burchardi Episcopi* was much more than a pitch for the elevation of a holy man. It presents his life as equal parts good shepherd and competent magnate, committed to excellence in both his spiritual and secular obligations (even when the latter were at odds with his conscience), without letting either one detract from the other. Burchard of Worms is thus a fine example of a “typical” Ottonian bishop on par with Udalrich of Augsburg.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ecce puella tenuissima erecto vexillo intrepida vos praecedit, et contra spiritalis nequitias pugnare non metuit. Ecce lorica fidei galeaque salutis induta, animo imperterrito contra inimicum dimicare est parata. Vita Burchardi* 13.838.41-43.



Thangmar, *Vita Sancti Bernwardi Episcopi Hildesheimensis*

Bernward of Hildesheim bears comparison to Burchard on several points. They were contemporaries, both having trained under Archbishop Willigis of Mainz, and likely knew each other.<sup>20</sup> They died within two years of one another in 1022 and 1025, respectively. Both men participated in the military actions of Otto III. Both courted the favor of Otto's successor Henry II to persuade him to intervene in a local struggle that threatened to break out into armed violence. In the case of the *Vita Sancti Bernwardi*, we do have a clear author. Thangmar was probably a lower-class Saxon freeman who had served as Hildesheim's secretary and archivist<sup>21</sup> and was his bishop's close companion and advisor, and thus in an ideal position to document his complicated life. His work comes across as rather different document than the *Vita* of Burchard. It is easily double in length and goes into greater detail about its subject's travails in the cutthroat theater of Ottonian church politics.

Moving in the imperial circle, Bernward found himself playing for higher stakes than Burchard had in the relatively peripheral see of Worms. His attachment to the powerful and influential Willigis would prove a double-edged sword. Willigis was instrumental in securing the throne for the child-king Otto III following the death of his father in 983<sup>22</sup> and was a principal advisor to his mother and regent, Theophanu, likely serving her in the

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<sup>20</sup> Francis J. Tschan, *Saint Bernward of Hildesheim* 28.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 46.

campaign against Bohemia in 990.<sup>23</sup> Through the archbishop's influence, Bernward secured a position as the young king's tutor, a job at which he excelled.<sup>24</sup> When Theophanu went to war, Bernward undoubtedly accompanied his royal pupil and learned military science alongside him in the field.<sup>25</sup> However, he seemed to have disapproved of Otto's grand vision of the glories of Rome reborn,<sup>26</sup> which put him at odds with Willigis. He must have had the young king's ear a bit too much for the archbishop's liking. When the see of Hildesheim came conveniently vacant in 993, Willigis saw to it that Bernward was promoted to fill it, removing him from Otto's immediate circle.<sup>27</sup>

Bernward stepped into a job that was as much a military posting as a pastoral one. The Magyars had not been a significant threat to Saxony since the time of Henry I<sup>28</sup> (and certainly not since Otto I defeated them in 955), but the incursions of the Norse and Slavs continued to be particularly troublesome during Bernward's tenure.<sup>29</sup> Widukind of Corvey referred to Hildesheim as an *urbs*,<sup>30</sup> implying strong fortification, and the barbarians knew that best-defended cities held the treasures most worth plundering. As

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>24</sup> Thangmar *Vita Sancti Bernwardi* 278.2.19-21.

<sup>25</sup> Thangmar 7.284.20-28 and Tschan 53-4.

<sup>26</sup> Tschan 51.

<sup>27</sup> Thangmar 4.280 and Tschan 55.

<sup>28</sup> Tschan 90.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>30</sup> Widukind II.13

Otto III was obsessed with Italy, the defense of Saxony devolved increasingly onto the local authorities.<sup>31</sup> This was not an entirely unexpected burden, as the expense of defensive measures had been on Hildesheim's books since the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>32</sup> Thangmar says that Bernward took to his duties filled with divine inspiration: "[Following] the example of Christ, his Lord, the watchful shepherd of God's flock threw himself against the enemies of the church, exulting like a hero who steps onto his path."<sup>33</sup> Here again, spiritual and martial language go hand in hand. He built two new forts with Otto's permission.<sup>34</sup>

Bernward had domestic as well as foreign enemies to worry about. The local counts were increasingly resentful during this period of the bishops' increasing power from land and rights granted by the king and their jealousy often resulted in violence. For instance, Count Bruno of Brunswick of the Saxon Billung line had a history of hostility against Hildesheim.<sup>35</sup> During the brief struggle for the crown following the death of Otto III, he took what seems to have been pre-emptive action based simply on the bishop's political alignment:

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<sup>31</sup> Tschan 94.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>33</sup> *Unde vigilantissimus divini gregis pastor typo Christi, sui domini, adversariis aecclesiae, exultans ad currendam viam...* Thangmar 7.284.17-19.

<sup>34</sup> Thangmar 7.282-6 passim.

<sup>35</sup> Tschan 79.

“Many nobles, without fear of God, wanted to usurp the highest royal power for themselves. One, named Bruno, was well aware that the venerable Bishop Bernward held with unswerving loyalty to the revered Duke Henry [of Bavaria], and was afraid that Bernward would oppose his plans. Therefore, he eagerly gathered men-at-arms wherever he could find the enemies of the bishop and those who wished the destruction of Hildesheim Church, and went here and there, robbing and plundering the bishop’s properties and people.”<sup>36</sup>

Then there was Bernward’s military obligation to the king, which he managed to fulfill much of the time without having to march in person. Unlike many of his brother bishops, Bernward was disinclined to spend much time at court. As the court of Otto III, itinerant like that of all the Ottonians, was frequently on campaign in Italy, the provision of troops to the royal host and attendance on the monarch often went hand in hand. Bernward’s twentieth-century biographer Francis Tschan suggests that his monastic temperament and penchant for the arts would have made him frustrated and restless there, playing second fiddle to the bishops of more prominent sees such as Mainz and Cologne. His poor health (he suffered from a chronic stomach ailment), along with the expense of the long journey, probably gave him good reasons to absent himself.<sup>37</sup> No doubt he also found it politic to keep himself at a distance to avoid sharing his opinion of the emperor’s Italian ambitions.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, in the winter of 1000-1001, he was obliged to travel to

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<sup>36</sup> *Interea vota principum in diversa rapiuntur, plerisque regni fastigium sine respectu timoris Dei usurpare nitentibus. Unde princeps quidam Bruno nomine, sciens venerabilem Bernwardum episcopum domno Heinricho duci reverentissimo esse fidissimum, timens ne coeptis eius adversaretur si quid inciperit, quoscumque in exicium illius vel in dampnum Hildenesheimensis aecclesiae armare poterat, pro viribus institit, hinc praedis et rapinis passim bachatus in loca et homines episcopi.* Thangmar 38.336.4-11.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 103-104.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 106.

Rome to appeal to both the emperor and the pope regarding the convent of Gandersheim in his diocese<sup>39</sup> (of which more below).

Thangmar went with him and his account of their adventure is rich in detail. Although military service was not the main reason for his journey, the bishop ended up taking part in two actions under Otto's command. In the first instance, Bernward was present at the investment of the rebellious city of Tivoli.<sup>40</sup> Despite the impressive siege engines at his disposal, the emperor was unable to force the burghers to surrender and asked his former tutor if he should cut his losses and break off the operation, risking shame. Bernward replied, "I will not suffer you, my lord, whom I love dearer than life, to be so shaken. Command that the city be pressed all the harder, for though I long to return home, I will not forsake your Majesty until I see by God's grace the city and its people subjected to your law."<sup>41</sup> This is not so much tactical as spiritual advice, an attempt by Bernward to stiffen Otto's resolve, and gives no indication of the bishop's own military knowledge. In any event, it worked; the emperor ordered his troops to intensify their assault and the citizens made a ritual submission to him a few days later.

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<sup>39</sup> Thangmar 19.306-8.

<sup>40</sup> Thangmar 23.316-18 *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ad quem ille: "Non patior," ait, "super his vos, anima mi, quem vita cariorum habeo, commoveri. Sed nunc praecipite, artiori obsidione urbem vallari; nam etsi reditum ad patriam cupio, non ante a maiestate vestra diverto, quam urbem populumque vestro iuri subacta, Dei pietate, videbo."* Thangmar 23.316.16-20.

In the second instance, recounted in the following chapter, Otto and his entourage were themselves besieged in a palace in Rome by a hostile populace. Bernward was very much in the thick of the action here. He blessed the emperor's soldiers and made a stirring speech to inspire them, took up the Holy Lance and readied himself to serve as standard-bearer (*signifer*), and the next morning rode out at the forefront of the army against the enemy. Bernward apparently hoped for an end to the clash with minimal bloodshed. The cowed rebels obliged him, laying down their arms and submitting to the emperor on the following day.<sup>42</sup> The *Vita* does not specify whether or not Bernward wore armor for the sortie and the Holy Lance was certainly too valuable a relic to be used for anything but a symbol and rallying point. Thangmar thus presents Bernward as a man of surpassing bravery to put himself in harm's way with no protection but faith and his companions, in the same manner as Saint Udalrich during the Magyar siege of Augsburg. (Hatto Kallfelz has translated *parat*, "prepared," as *rüstete er sich selber*, "equipped / armored himself." One is tempted to picture Bernward kitted out in helmet and *lorica* for the charge, but Thangmar's Latin text leaves this entirely to the reader's imagination.)<sup>43</sup>

Following the death of Otto III, the Italian theater ceased to be Bernward's concern. Henry II cared much more about German affairs and his military record reflected it. He campaigned against Boleslav Chrobry of Poland in 1004 and 1005 and against Count Baldwin of Flanders in 1007. Bernward may have marched on the latter expedition,

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<sup>42</sup> Thangmar 24.318.

<sup>43</sup> Thangmar 24.318.17, trans. Kallfelz on 319, line 15.

though not in the Polish wars.<sup>44</sup> There is no evidence that he took the field when Boleslav intruded again in 1015 and 1017, though he probably provided troops; while Thangmar shows that his patron believed in fulfilling his greater military obligations, he is less clear on Bernward's service in person. There was another Slav uprising in 1018, but because Henry had greater concerns, Hildesheim was probably not involved.<sup>45</sup>

Deeds of armed might were not, in any case, what Bishop Bernward is remembered for. He is best remembered for the dispute over the convent of Gandersheim that "occupied [his] mind for nearly half his pontificate and was a frequent source of worry to him for much of the other half,"<sup>46</sup> and which very nearly turned into an ecclesiastical civil war. The controversy was rooted in a simple question: did Gandersheim fall under the aegis of Hildesheim or did it report directly to the archbishop of Mainz? It had been founded within the former diocese in 852, but then re-settled on the river Gande four years later, a site whose jurisdiction was debatable.<sup>47</sup> Bernward's troubles were sown in 987 with the veiling of the twelve-year-old Princess Sophia, the elder sister of Otto III. The stubborn and precocious royal novice insisted that only Archbishop Willigis of Mainz was of suitable dignity to preside, over the protests of Osdag, then bishop of

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<sup>44</sup> Tschan 98.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 100.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 157.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 153-163 passim.

Hildesheim.<sup>48</sup> Under the ineffectual watch of the elderly and ill abbess Gerberga, the younger nuns defied monastic discipline and led a material lifestyle, instigated by Sophia and indulged by Willigis. The princess preferred to live at her brother's court even after she took up the mantle of acting abbess. When Bernward scolded her for her failings, he earned her enmity and that of her protector.<sup>49</sup>

The rivalry quickly escalated and turned militant. Bernward arrived at Gandersheim in September of 1000 to stand on his rights and consecrate its new church at Gerberga's invitation. Thangmar protests that nothing was further from his mind, but the denial rings hollow.<sup>50</sup> Not only had nothing been prepared for the ceremony, the nuns were openly hostile to him and the absent Sophia had apparently mustered her men-at-arms to intimidate the bishop: "The only thing we found was a contingent of men who had been set against him, to cast him out violently should he try by force with his people to consecrate the church."<sup>51</sup> Unable to see the ceremony through, Bernward placidly celebrated mass, forbade anyone else to perform the duty in his absence, and retreated. The gauntlet had been thrown down. Willigis came with a coterie of bishops and nobles to usurp the privilege a week later, but Thangmar and another of Bernward's allies, Bishop Ekkehard of Schleswig, stood up and argued that the archbishop's actions were a

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 163-4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 168-9.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 173.

<sup>51</sup> *...nil paratum repperit, immo aliquos collectos, qui illi resisterent, et cum iniuria eicerent, si forte cum suis aecclesiam conscrare violenter appeteret.* Thangmar 17.302.17-19.



violation of canon law. Willigis convened a synod in November to settle the matter, but Bernward had already departed for Rome to appeal to authority of the Holy See and the conclave could not make a binding ruling without him present.<sup>52</sup>

Though Bernward returned from Italy with Pope Sylvester's confirmation of his rights in hand, a further synod was slated for June of 1001 at Pöhlde to reinforce the Holy See's authority and reprimand Willigis. The papal legate presided over a chaotic assembly, made tense by an undercurrent of resentment on the part of the German magnates over their emperor's Italo-centric policies.<sup>53</sup> When judgement against Willigis was read out,

“...the doors of the church flew open, and a crowd of laymen burst in with a great noise and tumult; the men of Mainz called loudly for arms and made wild threats against the apostolic vicar and Bishop Bernward. Yet the legate and the bishop were not intimidated by the hubbub nor by the threats; although they had the greater number of troops, they did not call for arms, but rather sought to calm the excitement.”<sup>54</sup>

Order was restored and the meeting adjourned until the next day, when it was discovered that Archbishop Willigis had slipped out of Pöhlde in the night with his followers. He may have done so to avoid the possibility of losing an armed confrontation with his rival,

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<sup>52</sup> Tschan 176-178 passim.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 182.

<sup>54</sup> *Ianuæ interim aecclēsiæ panduntur, laici intromittuntur, fit strepitus tumultusque validus, Mogontinis exultantibus arma exposcunt, immensas minas ingerunt adversus apostolici vicarium et Bernwardum episcopum. Legatus autem et episcopus Bernwardus, nec tumultu moti, nec minis territi, licet numerosiores haberent militum copias, non arma fremunt, sed seditionem compescunt.* Thangmar 28.326.2-7.

but he certainly did it to nullify the legate's jurisdiction over him by absenting himself,<sup>55</sup> as Bernward had done earlier. The observation that the archbishop's *milites* "called loudly for arms" and that Bernward's followers declined to do so seems to indicate that no one had actually violated the sanctity of the church with weapons. It suggests that this was not an act of real aggression by Willigis but a bit of theatrical saber-rattling that gave him plausible deniability, as he could probably have palmed the blame off on his subordinates if things turned against him.

Bernward may have been anticipating more than a legal conflict when he spent that summer reinforcing Hildesheim's defenses.<sup>56</sup> His fears would not have been unjustified. Invited to celebrate a feast at the convent of Hilwartshausen, he sent a pack train ahead of him with the necessary regalia, but "the Archbishop's men fell on it in the night, broke up everything, and pitifully beat some of the bishop's servants."<sup>57</sup> Shortly thereafter, Bernward prepared to visit Gandersheim again to assert his rights, only to learn that

"...a great multitude opposed him, armed no differently than if they had been summoned to open war. These people Sophia had brought together, namely, all the vassals of the archbishop who could be mustered, and those of her friends, and a group of her own servants; all the towers and fortifications around the church were filled with soldiers, and all against one man, their bishop, who came

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<sup>55</sup> Tschan 185.

<sup>56</sup> Tschan 181, re Thangmar 22 and 27.

<sup>57</sup> *...supervenientes nocturno tempore homines archiepiscopi, cuncta invadentes dissipaverunt, aliquantos vero domesticos episcopi crudeliter caesos dimiserunt.* Thangmar 31.328.6-9.

unarmed and only to bring blessings, they fortified their castle as if to defend against a host of barbarians.”<sup>58</sup>

Bernward decided to play it safe and forego his visit.<sup>59</sup>

The above series of incidents demonstrates how an inter-ecclesiastical feud could become as militarized as one between secular nobles, or between a lay lord and one of the church; yet the contest of will between Bernward and the Sophia-Willigis alliance always stopped short of actual bloodshed. The bishop’s antagonists seemed to have consciously reined in their followers from crossing the line between an armored shoving match and open war. Bernward, for his part, always took the conciliatory path even when his party may have had the numerical advantage, relying on royal and papal justice to win his case. This presumes that Thangmar’s text is reasonably true to the facts of the case. His bias is unavoidable, of course: witness the outrage that permeates his voice in describing the excessive lengths to which Sophia goes to arm Gandersheim against the bishop’s intrusion. Bernward is given the role of the suffering, peace-loving servant of the church, Sophia is a petulant child with more power and privilege than she deserves, and Willigis comes across as a willful and self-righteous bully. Even so, the fact that none of their

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<sup>58</sup> *Cui obstitit immensa multitudo, non minus armis instructa, quam si ad publicum bellum cogerentur. Hos concivit Sophya, cunctos videlicet quos vel de vassatico archiepiscopi vel de familia illius convocare poterat, omnes suos notos et familiares, et de propria familia manum validam; turres et munitiora loca circa aecclesiam armato complent milite, et contra unum hominem, suum videlicet episcopum, inermem, et benedictionem illis portantem, ita castellum muniunt, quasi barbarico procintu se defendere parent...* Thangmar 32.328.12-20.

<sup>59</sup> Tschan 186-187.

confrontations turned bloody indicates that the possession of a private army and the opportunity to use it did not automatically turn a church magnate into a warlord.

Though the bishops of Germany would rather have settled their differences with words than with drawn swords, the political situation had become far from orderly. The next synod that took place in August of 1001 was not only in defiance of papal jurisdiction, since the pope had already ruled on the matter, but it “clearly showed how impotent the emperor and his pope had become in Germany.”<sup>60</sup> (One imagines that Otto I would never have stood for his bishops carrying on like squabbling barons.) Bernward absented himself again. The papal legate, meanwhile, had called for an “official” synod in Rome over the Christmas season, which corresponded to another summons from Otto III to his bishops for reinforcements in enforcing his will over the rebellious Romans. Some led their troops but had no plans to attend the meeting, while others, Bernward and Willigis included, duly sent their contingents but stayed at home themselves.<sup>61</sup> Here may be seen the ability of the bishops to separate their spheres of responsibility and how they succeeded in fulfilling their duty to the state without necessarily compromising their positions on local matters. Although a movement was afoot amongst a segment of the

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<sup>60</sup> Tschan 188.

<sup>61</sup> *Vita Burchardi* 8.

German nobility to force Otto to abandon his lofty Italian plans, the bishops stayed loyal, even when their personal interests were at cross-purposes with the imperial agenda.<sup>62</sup>

As it happened, the emperor's untimely death made the conclusion of the oft-delayed synod moot and his successor had more important priorities than the settlement of the Gandersheim feud. Willigis and Sophia had been allies of Henry II in his bid for the crown, while Bernward had not; thus it behooved the bishop to bide his time carefully and prove his loyalty to the new king before pushing the matter further. He continued to support Henry in all political and religious matters for the next several years.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, in 1006, the emperor negotiated a settlement with Willigis that granted Gandersheim to Bernward without alienating any of the parties involved.<sup>64</sup>

The lesson that should be taken away from the tribulations of Bishop Bernward is that the Ottonian bishop operated in an inextricable relationship between military organization and the maintenance of property and rights, whether his power was exercised on behalf of the monarch and the Reich or in support of a personal or diocesan interest. While Bernward managed to avoid naked armed violence in his confrontations with Willigis and Sophia, his skill in maneuvering both his followers and his political clout to counter them was no less an exercise in strategy and tactics. He ultimately succeeded in his case because of the good relations he maintained with Otto III and Henry II through the timely

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<sup>62</sup> Tschan 189.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 193-194 passim.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 195.

provision of political and military support; but it should be obvious that the bishops' need for private armies was more complex than their duty to provide the royal host with troops on demand.

## CONCLUSION

Given the preponderance of evidence for the participation of German church magnates in war during the eighth through tenth centuries, one may very well ask the question not whether bishops and abbots saw combat in person, but rather how they managed to avoid it. War was so omnipresent in the Frankish kingdoms, and so bound up in a militant interpretation of Christianity, that it would have been nearly impossible for the higher clergy to disentangle themselves altogether from armed violence and follow a purely spiritual and pacific lifestyle. Even though bishoprics and monasteries technically belonged to the Church—however abstract that institution may have been at the time—and not to the individual office holders, ecclesiastical lords had been saddled with many of the same burdens as land-owning nobles ever since Constantine the Great had granted his bishops secular authority<sup>1</sup> and given them a permanent stake in the things that were Caesar's. As the custodians of valued property and the people living there, they bore the responsibility for maintaining physical defenses and armed followings to stand up to the hostility of both "barbarians" and fellow-Christians. This contradictory situation originated in late antiquity as Roman civil and military structure in the West collapsed and was supplanted by Germanic rule and was exacerbated by the introduction in the late sixth and seventh centuries of the warlike Frankish nobility into the church hierarchy alongside the original Gallo-Roman aristocracy. If the political community of the Carolingian empire, both lay and ecclesiastical, was collectively called "the army" even

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron 61.

when it was not actively under arms,<sup>2</sup> then it seems appropriate to look back on Frankish war through the lens of Clausewitz and see it as “politics by other means.” Because bishops and abbots wielded political authority to an equal or greater extent than spiritual authority, and in spite of the loud protests of reformers, they could not have held themselves completely aloft from military activity any more than the Christian kingdoms of the early medieval period could have been divided into the modern compartments of church and state.

A comparison of the important narrative sources from the Carolingian period of 751-919 to those from the Ottonian one of 919-1024 shows no significant change over two and a half centuries in the credo of clerical writers *vis á vis* war itself. War was inevitable, necessary, and part of the natural order of human affairs. When conducted as a “just” war on royal authority derived from God according to the tenets of Saint Augustine, it could be a virtuous and redeeming activity with divine assurance of victory. However, it is difficult to make an equally broad statement regarding the general clerical position on churchmen who took part in war. In the first place, the evidence for these men lies thicker on the ground in the Ottonian sources than in the Carolingian ones, not because the practice was less common during the earlier regime, but because of the brevity of the prevailing *annales* format and the lack of ecclesiastical *vitae*. In the second, military participation covered a wide spectrum of activity, from providing troops led by a subordinate to bearing arms and fighting in person. The most strident objection

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<sup>2</sup> Reuter, “Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare” 13.



to bishops and abbots marching with the army for any but a spiritual purpose came from Saint Boniface in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century when the Carolingian dynasty was just finding its feet. By the time Charles the Great came to power in 768, Bonifacian reform had been pushed aside by military necessity. Thereafter it is safe to say that it was normal and accepted practice for churchmen to lead their own troops for the royal army. As members of the landholding class alongside the lay nobility, and particularly in light of the influence the king had on their appointments, bishops and abbots were expected to fulfill their feudal obligation to help safeguard the *res publica* as well as to oversee the defense of the properties and people within their ecclesiastical jurisdictions. So long as they took no part in the fighting themselves, they drew little or no criticism for these actions *per se*.

On the other hand, the position of the writers on churchmen who took their military activities too far and conducted themselves as secular captains rather than men of the cloth—not to say those who actually went armed into battle with the intent of shedding blood—varied tremendously across the period, without suggesting a particular pattern or trend in clerical thought. Some Carolingian writers seem to have accepted the practice or remained neutral while others found it reprehensible. The sampling of correspondence seen above, though technically outside the scope of this survey, shows the range of reactions. Whereas Boniface railed against churchmen who shed blood in battle, Lupus Servatus and Claudius of Turin seem to have shrugged and accepted soldier's work as the price of advancing Christendom (even if, as in Lupus' case, one sidestepped the duty due to a lack of qualifications). The Carolingian *annales* do not contain many instances of

churchmen at war and those that do appear are scant on detail; thus, the data from these sources remain ambiguous. The lone exception seems to be Bishop Wala of Metz, killed in action in 882 against the Norse. Hincmar of Reims, who otherwise does not seem to have had a problem with bishops serving in the field, called Wala out for bearing arms contrary to his office, but neither the Fulda chronicler nor Regino of Prüm made the same accusation when reporting his death.

The positions of the Ottonian chroniclers and biographers likewise ran a wide gamut. The archbishop-duke Bruno of Cologne had an enthusiastic advocate in Ruotger, received cautious praise from Widukind of Corvey and Adalbert of Magdeburg, only a passing (yet positive) mention by Thietmar of Merseburg, and subtle, oblique disapproval from Flodoard of Reims. Liudprand of Cremona ignored Bruno altogether, but his disapproval of militant bishops comes through clearly in the vitriol he directs at Manasses of Arles who “became a soldier” and his denunciation of Pope John XII for taking the field armed and armored. Thietmar stood firmly at the opposite end of the spectrum, recounting the campaigns of fellow bishops throughout his *Chronicon* and celebrating the bloody hand-to-hand victory of Bishop Michael of Regensburg with barely restrained pride. In short, because the clerical writers who commented on this phenomenon differed by locale, background, allegiance and political agenda, the opinions they recorded were as varied as the authors themselves.

And yet, for all the written accounts that place scores of Ottonian bishops and abbots in the thick of war—whether leading their troops, conducting sieges of hostile cities or

defending their own, beating back the enemies of the Reich, or dying ignominiously when their armies were routed—the overwhelming majority of these men, even those killed in action, were not said to have fought in person, weapon in hand. Only Michael of Regensburg is described in unequivocal language as having done so. Even his case, as argued above, is open to interpretation. The conclusion that follows is that while the narrative sources suggest that bishops and abbots in the early Carolingian period went to war under arms as a matter of course, by the time of the Ottonians, genuine “warrior-prelates” who armed themselves and came to blows with the enemy alongside their *milites* were very much the exception to the rule.

The rule itself—which is to say, the ideal of the Ottonian church magnate that found general favor with the clerical community—is best revealed in the *vitae* of the bishops who fulfilled both their military and pastoral duties in equal measure without losing sight of either. Bruno of Cologne has often been put forth as such a model, but because of the unique and pioneering scope of his career, not to mention the controversy he generated, he should be held apart from the norm. Udalrich of Augsburg, Burchard of Worms, and Bernward of Hildesheim all conformed more closely to the ideal. Each of them was prompt, diligent, and competent in responding to the defensive needs of both his diocese and the kingdom at large and each followed through with the unpleasant necessities of warfare in spite of moral misgivings. Gerhard and Thangmar also drew attention to the willingness of Udalrich and Burchard, respectively, to ride out into the midst of battle with no armor other than faith. With the detailed portraits of these three bishops in mind, it is possible to take stock of the numerous other prelates mentioned in the pages of the

Ottonian sources and judge whether or not the clerical writers of the time considered them worthy of their offices.

The question of whether the rise of the Salian dynasty and the onset of the Investiture Controversy caused the era of the “fighting bishop” in Germany to fade away, as Henry Mayr-Harting has proposed, must be answered in a different study. The bishops and abbots who commanded troops at the behest of the Ottonian emperors did so for the most part with a clear conscience, in the face of the inherent paradox of the Christian soldier and the even flimsier premise of the pious pastor as military leader, secure in the knowledge that they did God’s work through the royal authority. It should come as no surprise that Vegetius, the late Roman writer and proponent of military reform, was widely read among ninth and tenth century scholars;<sup>3</sup> his immortal declaration, *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you want peace, prepare for war),<sup>4</sup> is no less paradoxical than the Augustinian concept of the “just war” and aptly representative of the position of the Ottonian prelate.

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<sup>3</sup> Bowlus 50, fn 15.

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Vegetius Renatus *De re Militari* III, trans. N.P. Milner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 63.



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